MARJORIE'S LITERARY DOLLS

PATTEN BEARD

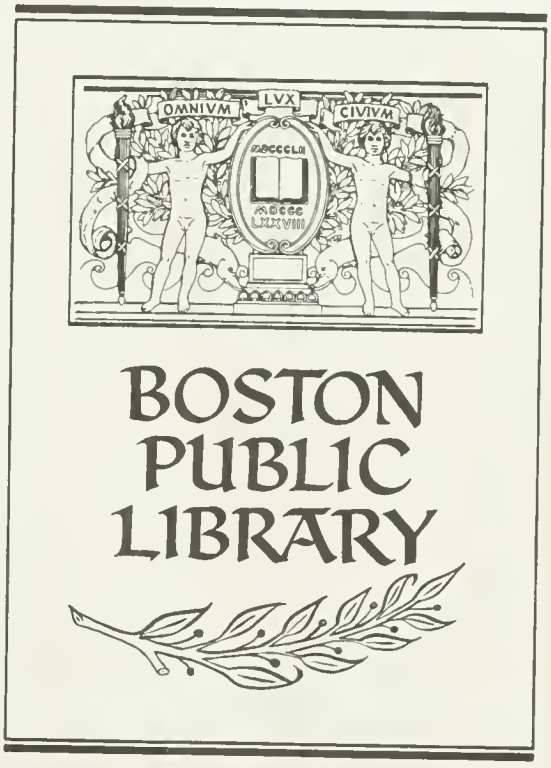
October 1922 —
Norwalk
— Conn —

Dear Cynthia Dorf
Belonging to Mrs. Laurence: —

Here we are outside Ink's chapters —
Marjorie, Mrs. Wolsen and Patten Beard —
If it had not been for this story, Vanessa Ida Adams
would not have gone to Antigues for she was sure
Patten Beard because Patten Beard had dolls
and because the lady to whom she belonged just
wanted another doll like that has, so far, never
been written — but will be some fine day! The pictures come
to you under this —

Cordially,
Patten Beard

MARJORIE'S LITERARY DOLLS



Marjorie loved to play with Mr. and Mrs. Wolsen

MARJORIE'S LITERARY DOLLS

By PATTEN BEARD

AUTHOR OF "THE JOLLY BOOK OF BOXCRAFT," ETC.

WITH NINETEEN PHOTOGRAPHIC ILLUSTRATIONS OF MARJORIE'S DOLLS ARRANGED BY THE AUTHOR

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

TO

"MY MARJORIE"

AND TO HER DOLL

GEORGE ABIHAD WOLSEN

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A word of thanks is due to *The Continent* of Chicago for permission to reprint part of Mr. G. Abihad Wolsen's biography.

MARJORIE'S LITERARY DOLLS

In the Land of the Make-Believe
Is the beautiful City of Play:
Go carry the little girls there, Little Book,
With a smile and a laugh some day!

CHAPTER I

IT is wonderful to think that a Very Important Event may take shape from a very unimportant beginning. If I had not gone over to Marjorie's house one day—a very common event—and if Marjorie had not called out, as soon as she knew I had come to call, "Oh, I've something I want to show you upstairs!" and if I had not gone upstairs, there might never have been a story about Marjorie's dolls—which is, as you may judge, one of the Very Important Events that come from small beginnings!

Maybe this story would have to have been written some twenty years hence, when Marjorie herself is grown up. Now, I am glad to say, she is just a little girl who likes dolls.

But there are other things besides dolls that Marjorie likes—books, especially *my* books, which of course makes *me* like Marjorie; and then, too, we both like to write. Marjorie writes stories, and verses, and edits a paper called THE MONTHLY POST. Sometimes she lets me contribute to it, but the magazine is not yet on a firm financial basis. It may take twenty years or so to make it that. I have to tell you this because it shows why the George A. Wolsens happened to move into Marjorie's doll-house. And I first heard of them the day of the very unimportant beginning. It happened this way.

Marjorie at the top of the stairs in her little blue dress just sang out, "Oh, DO come upstairs!" and so I went. There on the floor was a little village that Marjorie had made out of boxes. It was really very clever and I admired it very much, but—but——

"Oh, Marjorie," I laughed, "where did you ever find such a

perfectly delightful doll-house?" and I forgot all about the cardboard village and fell on my knees upon Marjorie's floor so that I could explore it all, just as if I were eleven years old and not—well, what's the use of telling your age! It doesn't matter. There are always seven candles on my birthday cake and I'm cleverer than Peter Pan about my birthdays. Whenever I have a new year on a birthday morning, I put it in my pocket, and I always keep a hole in that pocket so that the extra year will be lost out sometime during the day.

Marjorie knows about that, and she knows that I really am a little girl even though I have to wear a grown-up hat when I'd far prefer a tam. She jumped over the cardboard village that was so nicely mapped out upon her floor, and she fell on her knees before the big white doll-house beside me.

"It's a Literary Gentleman that lives in that house," she explained. "He writes for the magazines—here he is!"

I looked! I was about to—what was I about to do but to take the Literary Gentleman up and examine him, when Marjorie interposed.

"Sh!" she warned with a pink finger against her lips—"He's BUSY! You mustn't disturb him!" I felt ashamed of myself. Why, suppose that I had spoiled his article by changing the train of his thought like that! I could have hugged Marjorie for having stopped me——

"Do you suppose we'll disturb him if we whisper?" I inquired.

"No," returned Marjorie in a stage whisper, "only you mustn't take him away from his desk!"

"I only wanted to see his necktie," I explained. "It is so very literary, Marjorie—it's exactly like a periodic sentence, loose and flowing, constructed with a view toward style."

Marjorie looked at me doubtfully. "I think it's nice," she defended. "Isn't it the kind that editors wear?"

I considered. "They don't always wear them quite as green as that," I replied. "Mostly, they are red, I think. They never seem to be blue. Lady editors invariably wear black ties. Is the Literary Gentleman an editor also?"

"He just writes for the magazines."

"What magazines?"

"Oh, THE MONTHLY POST and all the rest."

"Does he get accepted?" But right here pell-mell into the room came Dotty, who is very little indeed and very cuddlesome, and very apt to monopolize the conversation.

"I've dot a doll," she suggested. "His name's Hawwie—his legs is bofe broken off an'—" she heaved a sigh that was so deep it went down to the little round toes of her black slippers, doubled and came back again—"his arms is too!" She fairly beamed. And then quite as suddenly as she had come, she disappeared. "I'll det 'im," she volunteered, and Marjorie took up the account of the Literary Gentleman where we left off.

"You see," she explained, "he isn't exactly celebrated yet. He hasn't written any book or anything. He's just trying to be literary. He has to do something, you know, so he thought he would write. That's his business—it HAD to be because he has a desk, and a typewriter, and pen, and ink, and a portfolio."

I glanced at the room where the Literary Gentleman sat in a high-backed chair, squeezed fast between it and a little oak desk. Yes, everything was nicely complete—ink-stand, blotter, tiny pencil, pen; and the way that paper was strewn about made the entire scene seem very homelike and natural to a literary person like myself. My eyes took in the other parts of the room in detail, the tiny table with its lamp, the books upon the table, the wee work-basket lying on a chair——

"Is that his wife?" I asked as I peered through an open door into the next room.

Marjorie nodded. "Her name's Marie Claire. She's very fond of making jelly. See the baby! His name's Jackie. They call him Snookie, but they oughtn't to. I think she came up to tell George that the alarm clock had gone off——"

"Did it go off?"

"Yes." Marjorie indicated a bit of a clock scarcely as large as her pink fingernail. It stood on the top of the Literary Gentleman's desk. "He winds it up when he starts to work," she explained. "He sets it for the luncheon hour and if he doesn't take it for his typewriter bell when it goes off, he knows it's time to stop writing and go down to the dining-room. If he takes it for his typewriter bell, Mrs. Wolsen has to leave the kitchen and come up to tell him —don't you see?"

I saw. Mentally, I made note of the alarm-clock plan.

"There's their cat——"

"Their cat?"

"Yes; they brought it with them in a covered market-basket when they moved in. It meowed—oh, it MEOWED fearfully. George doesn't like the cat. It makes him restless to have it in the room. What he wants is a nice bull-dog. He's going to buy one when he gets rich. He says it will keep burglars away, and tramps. The cat just stays in the kitchen or else it gets shut into George's study and meows for him to open the door when he is trying to think of the right word to use. It annoys him fearfully, but Marie—she likes the cat, so he tries to be good to it."

"Doesn't Snookie's crying ever disturb him?"

"Oh, JACKIE never cries," returned Marjorie. "He's a very good baby! See, there's his cradle, and, oh, look here!" She held up some wee golf-sticks and a tennis racquet. "These are Marie Claire's," she smiled. "Aren't they just dear!"

And from this, somehow, we switched off to examine all the details of the big white doll-house. To begin with, it had a won-

derful roof with a red chimney a-top. The chimney had a place quite large enough for a Santa Claus doll to go down—though I fancy he might have stuck fast and not gone very far.

Under the roof was an ATTIC! Now, did you ever hear of such a delectable thing as an attic in a doll-house before! Why, just to see all the funny little trunks stored there—just to see them and the

Marjorie liked to play in the big white doll-house

dollie hat-box, made you feel sure that there must be letters tied up with blue ribbons inside and maybe Revolutionary ball-gowns.

"Did their ancestors go over to England with William the Conqueror? Does Marie Claire belong to the D. A. R.?"

But Marjorie was intent upon other things. "I think they're just plain Americans," she replied absently. "That's the bed-room. See, the bureau drawers open and shut! And there's a quilt—

Grandma made it. See—and isn't this a cute soap-dish! AND, oh, have you seen the oven in the stove?"

I shook my head—there were so many, many things to see in this big white doll-house that belonged to the Wolsen family! How could one see all—especially, how could one see an oven that is all shut up?

So Marjorie showed me the oven. Oh! merely to look at it made one crazy to beat up a cake! As for the flour bin, the pepper-pot, the bread-jar, and all the shining little sauce-pans—one didn't wonder much that Mrs. Marie Claire was so domestic. It explained itself, just as George's desk explained his being literary! Why, somehow, Marjorie and I quite forgot the dining-room with its flowered plates about its darling little shelf overflowing with china cups and saucers! We were in a dreamland where little dolls live far, far away, when Dotty came bouncing back into the room to land somewhere between us on our laps.

"Mamma's downstairs," she panted. "See says, why don't you tum down!" She pulled with all her fat little might a tug at my hand.

"I think we'll have to stop playing, Marjorie," I sighed. "I quite forgot. I'm so interested in the Wolsen family and their house. How long have you had them?"

"They moved in about Christmas time. Did I tell you George's middle name?"

I smoothed the creases out of my skirt—that's what one has to do, if one kneels before a doll-house after one grows up.

"No," I replied, starting toward the door.

Marjorie reached up to whisper in my ear. "I don't dare say it out loud," she suggested. "Mrs. Wolsen said she wouldn't let him have any such name. And so he just uses the initial. It's ABIHAD."

"Abihad!"

Marjorie nodded solemnly. "It was his great-great-grandfather's name."

"It 's better than George," I replied. "George is tame and not half so literary."

"I think so too," Marjorie declared. "He signs his manuscripts Abihad. He says editors will be sure to notice the new name." And then together, Marjorie, Dotty, and I raced downstairs—but I wanted to know more about the big white doll-house and I was fearfully interested in the George ABIHAD Wolsens! I meant to know more—I meant to be Mr. Wolsen's Boswell, and I gave Marjorie a little squeeze as we landed on the last step downstairs and told her so right there.

CHAPTER II

MARJORIE and I agree about promises: one must always try to keep them, promises that aren't kept are pretty poor things! So I started to write Mr. Wolsen's biography next day. I decided that all biographies begin with the parentage and childhood. I knew nothing about Mr. Wolsen's, so my first chapter had to wait till I could run over to Majorie's to glean the necessary information.

Marjorie was practicing! Now, if there is anything I want to reform it is that dreadful institution called "practicing!" It always happens that Marjorie is "practicing" when I come to ask her to play dolls with me. When one is practicing, one cannot play dolls, and practicing lasts a whole hour every day. But I do admire Marjorie's way of doing it. I do.

When I heard the tum-tum-tum of the piano, I knew that Marjorie was as BUSY as Mr. Wolsen had been when I first saw him wedged between his desk and his desk-chair, so I ran right over to the white doll-house by myself, and I rang the door-bell. (There isn't any, you know, but you *have to pretend!*)

Mrs. Wolsen came to the door. It was in the afternoon, mind you. She wore a sweeping-cap that had a fluted edge! (Well, what do you think of persons who come to the door in sweeping-caps in the afternoon! I think—well, maybe I'd better not say it. I'll be charitable!) It was really quite becoming—a sort of housekeeping halo.

She was a smallish little doll, about ten inches high, very attractive. She had medium light brown hair that curled about her

face. One couldn't exactly call it untidy, but it was rather frisky, as if she had been very active with house matters, dancing around with a dust cloth.

She was rather the doll-type: pretty, round-cheeked, pink complexion with a warm glow in her cheeks, blue eyes, and a baby-like mouth that curved at each corner with a hide-and-seek dimple when she smiled. I mightn't have liked her, but I detected a delicious bit of humor in her eyes, and so I fell in love with her at once.

She was very talkative. Housekeeping people always are. Usually, they tell you all about how they've just made six dozen kinds of jelly and sealed them, and labeled them, and how bad their cook is; but Mrs. Wolsen just told me about Mr. Wolsen. It seems he came from Germany—and she came from Germany, too, though she didn't know him then at all. He was a remarkable kind of child—he had learned to spell *cat* in Greek before he knew his alphabet at all! Think of it! It was re-mark-a-ble! That must have been the early dawning of his unusualness.

Mr. Wolsen had lived at Donneley's shop a long time before he took up his residence in the white doll-house. He had worn overalls at that time and been an ordinary boy-doll. Then, I imagine, he grew up and met Mrs. Wolsen, and they were married, and by-and-by they came to live in Marjorie's white doll-house. I thanked Mrs. Wolsen very much and just as I had shut the front-door (there really isn't any but that is pretend too), I heard Marjorie come racing up the stairs and I knew that, for the time, "practicing" was over. I was delighted. I knew she'd tell me more than Mrs. Wolsen had, because *she* didn't exactly belong to the family and she *could*.

"Oh," she greeted, "do you know—Mr. Wolsen got seven manuscripts back by the postman this morning and most of them contained rejection slips, because the editors didn't want them. He's fearfully discouraged. He's upstairs in the study trying to

write. He had to stop to clean the typewriter first. He's writing about pet cats."

"An essay?" I inquired.

"No, just how to take care of them—how much catnip to give them and how to make them broth. He's had to go downstairs twice already to ask Marie Claire what catnip looks like and how much cat's meat costs. It's going to be a very *useful* article. I think he'll send it to THE WEEKLY WELCOME—They don't pay on acceptance but it's necessary to write *something* every day and it's good practice to do what you don't like. He has the cat with him—see!"

Now, one of the blessed things about a doll-house is that one can see what is happening in all of its rooms at once. So I gazed into the upstairs study that was next the bed-room, and there was George pegging away at his typewriter. The alarm clock was there, too, and though I was too far away to hear it tick, I imagined that it must be set for about five-thirty to give time to dress for dinner.

He must have been having a very hard time getting started, for heaps and heaps of torn papers lay littered on the study floor and overflowed from the scrap-basket on to the rug that was placed by careful Mrs. Wolsen before the desk. (George's ink-bottle *might* tip over—nobody knew!) THE WEEKLY WELCOME and other papers for which George wrote were tossed on the table near the lamp and, to my mind, Mr. Wolsen seemed to know exactly what a room should look like if it were an author's study. His fingers flew over the typewriter at such a rate that I was astonished. I wondered whether he used the proper number of fingers to write with, and while I was wondering this and many other things, with Marjorie's hand in mine, we floated in a dream of play to the Land of Make-Believe. We no longer wondered what was happening in the white doll-house. We heard and saw it all.

Baby Jackie was up in the bed-room asleep on the big bed. He was bolstered around with two pillows so that he could not possibly fall off. He was covered up with a silk quilt. That was in the bed-room.

The door was slightly ajar into the study where George was pounding away. Evidently Jackie's slumber was not easily disturbed, for at the end of every line on *The Care of Pet Cats* the typewriter bell sounded a ringing which was full of warning. Once in a while George's fingers made a blunder, and then there was a smooch on the carbon copy underneath where things had to be erased, but, on the whole, the article on pet cats progressed fairly well. Once or twice Pussy-Cat, Mrs. Wolsen's kitty, tried to climb upon Mr. Wolsen's knees but he sat so close to the typewriter that it wasn't comfortable and Pussy-Cat jumped abruptly down. (George Wolsen didn't mind the interruption, even though it prevented his reaching the typewriter keys successfully when Pussy-Cat turned around three times and rubbed against the blue coat that he wore. He knew that this bit could be worked into the article and he accepted it tolerantly. It added "local color," so to speak.)

Click-click, click-click-click, click-click-click went the typewriter keys, click-click-click, click-click, click-click-click-click. Ding went the typewriter bell and Mr. Wolsen turned down *another* line. Click-click-click, click-click-click, click-click-click-click, click-click—DING! and Mr. Wolsen turned down *another* line. So it continued. Everything else was very quiet in the white doll-house.

Presently George jumbled the sheets he had written into a heap together, gave a hitch to his straight-backed chair and rose. He ran his fingers through his hair thoughtfully and looked at the sheets, sorted them, pushed back his chair: the article on pet cats was done! Yes, *done*—uphill work, too! Right here there was a furious whir from the little alarm clock that stood upon George's desk, but he was so absorbed in considering his manuscript that he ab-

sently took the noise for the typewriter bell, for some reason or other. He stood at his desk awhile looking over the pages. Then he frowned thoughtfully and paced to and fro over the study floor. He read out loud so as to get the swing of the words, and when Mrs. Wolsen ran upstairs to tell him dinner was ready, she found him standing beside the desk with a far-away expression which suggested

"He read out loud so as to get the swing of the words"

that he was intently searching his mind for the right word to express a delicate shade of meaning.

She stopped at the half-open door to peep in first, for she was always thoughtful about such things. Then she walked quietly up behind him.

"George, dear," she called—and her voice had an upward inflection that exactly fitted her smile, "didn't you hear the alarm clock go off?"

He started. "Why, no, Marie," he replied, "but I've finished the pet cat article. I'll be down just as soon as I fix it into shape in the envelope. I'm going to send it to THE WEEKLY WELCOME. I'm sure they will take it. It's exactly in their line—In one moment, Pet."

So Marie Claire closed the door softly and woke up Snookums. (It didn't seem as if a baby-doll ought to snooze so long, but Marjorie told me once that Jackie always slept a great deal—"Babies *always* do," she said.)

He was a very *good* baby.

The Pussy-Cat followed Marie downstairs and into the dining-room. From the little toy kitchen stove there came odors of savory things that little dolls like to eat. And presently George, with hair neatly brushed, appeared at the dining-room doorway.

"I've been thinking," said he, as they drew their chairs back, "that I ought to do some more serious work—I ought to write a book, maybe a novel!"

Marie Claire looked adoringly at him. "You could," she urged. "Surely you could! Have you any ideas about the sort of story?—A little more? Just *one* more tart, I made them after a rule that I found in *your* paper, THE WEEKLY WELCOME. Oh! don't give *that* to Jackie!"

And so, while the two of them chatted—George about matters literary and Marie concerning housekeeping trifles—Pussy-Cat purred under the dining-room table and the wee little plates on the white doll-house dining-room table grew empty. When the meal was over they turned up the lamp-wick (which really *would* turn up) and sat together by the light, Marie with her mending—because she *was* so awfully domestic, you know—and George with his rejected manuscripts. He read them aloud one after the other, but when Marie Claire criticized anything, he *always* said there was a reason why he had written it so. He asked her how to spell words

and how to punctuate. She was really away ahead of the dictionary, so Marjorie said.

It was in the midst of things that they began to talk of what they would do when THE VERY BIG CHECK CAME. It might come almost any day—seven rejected manuscripts in one day to the contrary!

George was for buying a bull-dog. He said he had always wanted one. Mrs. Wolsen declared that he ought to buy a new suit instead and that Jackie ought to have a carriage—because he didn't have any—and that she would like a handsome cloth suit, and a kitchen cabinet, and a new carpet in the study where the ink-bottle had tipped over and spoiled things under the rug by the desk, and the bed-room ought to be papered, and it would be fun to have a bonfire of the old oak furniture and have something *nicer*——

So Jackie was conveniently shipped off to sleep. He had been playing around upon the floor till now—pulling Pussy-Cat's tail, perhaps. Then they talked over the PLAN that was to be carried out when THE VERY LARGE CHECK should come.

George found all the back numbers of illustrated magazines. There are always such stacks of them wherever literary people are, Marjorie says, and Marie ran into the bed-room and pulled out the top little bureau drawer. She had a wee note-book there inside her little shopping bag. THEN George sat on the floor beside her rocking-chair, and when he turned the magazine over to the advertising pages, they looked at ALL the things and selected those they would like to buy. Every time that they both decided upon something, Marie Claire wrote it down in the wee little doll note-book with her wee little silver pencil in a wee little round hand. And she did it very proudly for she liked being George's secretary. My! what didn't they select! There was a Ford automobile, of course. George thought they might afford something

better, if it were A VERY LARGE CHECK INDEED, but Marie had simple tastes. She didn't care a bit for style.

"What's the use," she laughed. "We don't care about being very grand, do we?" But George tried to point out why *he* would like a more expensive one. Then they chose new furniture for the house, to please Marie Claire, and it would be a wonder of a white doll-house if only THE VERY BIG CHECK would come, for by eleven o'clock the wee note-book was full of every imaginable thing that the Wolsen family so needed! They had shopped in imagination the whole evening long and they had not half gone through *all* the magazines.

BUT it was late—eleven! The alarm clock on George's desk never lied. And so, somewhat reluctantly, they piled the magazines back into the closet upon the shelf and went off to dream of THE VERY LARGE CHECK that should some day come for something that Mr. George Abihad Wolsen had written.

CHAPTER III

"IT'S night now," Marjorie said. "George has just been down to the pantry in his felt slippers to let the cat into the kitchen. It always sleeps there on the braided rug before the stove at night. They leave the pantry door open so that pussy can catch any mice that happen to be about. Everything's quiet now."

"How dark it is," I murmured. Tick-tick-tick-tick, one could hear the little alarm clock that stood upon Mr. Wolsen's desk. Tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick-tick.

In the dimness there was the sharp snap of a match and Mrs. Wolsen pit-a-patted with lighted candle to the top of the hall stairs to see if *that* really was the cat moving about in the kitchen. It might be a burglar! She had the candlestick that had been on George's desk and the wee flame flared red.

"What's the matter?" It was the very sleepy muffled voice that was Mr. Wolsen's. He didn't sound a bit frightened. He ought to have gotten up and taken a golf-stick or *something* and gone downstairs to see what that noise was, but he had been working hard over the article on cats all day so he just didn't wait to find out what the matter was but snoozed peacefully back on his pillow resolving, I am sure, to buy a bull-dog when THE VERY, VERY LARGE CHECK did come.

"There isn't anything they could take that has any value," she murmured apologetically as she pit-a-patted back to her room with a flutter of pink kimono that Marjorie had made—"nothing but the Venetian vase that was a wedding present. They *might* take that. It cost about fifty dollars. "George," she called in a

stage whisper—I couldn't help but laugh—"George, do you think they have taken your article?"

In an instant George was awake—*wide* awake! "Who?" he inquired.

"The burglar," Mrs. Wolsen giggled.

There was a little snort of contempt in the darkness that sounded very like Mr. Wolsen, and Marjorie and I knew that they had subsided for the night to dream of THE VERY BIG CHECK that *might* come some day—some day, perhaps.

Tick-tick-tick-tick went the alarm clock on George's desk and Marjorie shut her eyes and pretended that she was gently snoring. It was still night in the Land of Make-Believe.

Gradually, however, the sky grew dusky gray and along the horizon there was a faint bright streak of yellow. It grew and grew till the sky was radiantly pink and the day had come.

Then Mrs. Wolsen was up and downstairs bustling about, and George was upstairs shaving with something that looked very much *like* a table knife, only Marjorie said it *was not*, and Jackie was crowing in his crib, and Pussy-Cat was very much in the way in the kitchen rubbing against Marie Claire's little ankles as she set the flowered dishes back on the breakfast table and warmed the Toasted Corn-Flakes in the oven. (It was just the cutest little box of Toasted Corn-Flakes—perfectly *dear!*)

'Marjorie," I suggested, "they're just going to eat breakfast now. The postman doesn't come till ten. Suppose you and I take a little walk to the toy-shop on the corner." I jingled my purse in my pocket and patted it. "I had two checks in the mail this morning—let's celebrate!"

So we left the Land of Make-Believe where the Wolsen family were breakfasting and together we hippety-hopped down the garden walk.

"What're you going to get?" Marjorie panted.

"You wait and you'll see," I retorted—and I just wouldn't let Marjorie come into the shop with me. I made her stay outside and blindfold her eyes with her hands—and *not* peek! She said she couldn't do it but she always plays fair so I knew she *would*.

When I came out, I had some nice curious lumpy parcels. My purse wasn't *very* much thinner but it wasn't quite so plump. It looked healthy anyway.

Marjorie poked the parcels but I scatted her off. "No," said I, "no, no! Something very fine is going to happen to the Wolsen family. It's—— You'll know by and by!"

Dotty met us at the garden gate. "Wot you dot?" she insinuated, but Margaret, next-door, came out upon the porch with a stick of candy and Dotty's plump little legs ran off in that direction. Parcels may contain wholly uninteresting articles *but candy is candy*.

We went through the front door and upstairs to Marjorie's room. From Marjorie's Mother's study came the click of a typewriter. She was very busy writing an article or—maybe, verses. It sounded almost as busy as Mr. Wolsen, Marjorie said.

But soon we were lost to the realities about us for we were in front of the big white doll-house and back in the Land of Make-Believe where little dolls live and talk.

Mrs. Wolsen had washed the breakfast dishes in a wee dish-pan. She had evidently been very spry for the housework seemed to be all done. Upstairs all was in the neatest possible array. Even the pin-cushion on the bureau was *ex-actly* in the middle of the bureau-scarf. *That* may not be artistic but it *is* orderly anyhow.

The chairs in the dining-room were set back against the wall. The table-cloth was folded and put away. The little flower-decorated plates that had pansy buds upon them were in the china-closet, and Marie Claire was stewing *something* in a kettle upon the stove.

She had on a sort of grayish dress and a big brown denim apron that had a pocket sewed onto it. She wore a white boudoir cap—evidently she thought caps becoming.

I asked Marjorie if *she* knew what was in the big kettle on the stove. "Plum jam," she replied promptly. "Mrs. Wolsen dotes on plum jam and so does George. They even have it for breakfast sometimes."

(It seemed to me that the kitchen was re-mark-a-bly neat for plum jam. I didn't see any glasses about or any stickiness anywhere on the table. Maybe things hadn't yet reached that stage.)

Jackie was playing on the braided rug with Pussy-Cat. I told Marjorie that that wasn't a bit right—and he hadn't *any* shoes on either! There were just his little pinkie toes, and I was afraid he'd catch cold. Mrs. Wolsen—well, I suppose mothers must know what they're about, but it wasn't a bit along the line of modern ideas. He ought to have been wrapped up and put out-of-doors in a carriage. Why, I even believe she let him play with the hod-shovel. It was quite clean—but, mercy! Imagine! A *hod-shovel!*

But Marie Claire was testing the plum jam and she had an enormous spoon in one hand, and evidently she was bringing Jackie up to take care of himself. He did seem to be a self-reliant sort of chap and always happy.

Then the grocery boy arrived with the day's marketing in a big basket, and I saw that there were Toasted Corn-Flakes *again* in that! There were innumerable little bits of parcels and paper bags but the bread wasn't in a waxed package at all! The market-basket stayed on the chair where the grocer's boy had left it.

We watched Marie Claire a long time stewing the *something* that was plum jam upon the cook-stove. We began to smell a delicious odor of stewing plums but the jam took such a time to reach the really interesting state where one can lick the spoon, that

we thought we'd find out what Mr. Wolsen was doing at the typewriter in the study.

It was a quarter to ten and Mr. Wolsen seemed fearfully restless. He had been out to the post-box to send off the seven fated manuscripts and the article on pet cats. He had returned, glanced over his note-book, looked at the clock, and gone to the window. He had stood for a long time peering into the street BUT he didn't hear any postman's whistle. So George went back to his desk. Really, he was fearfully uneasy. Marjorie said it was because he was waiting for the postman. He couldn't seem to do any work till *after* the postman came. He looked all through the record that told where he had sent his manuscripts to see what ought to be reported on but he didn't seem to see anything. YET he *was* on the outlook for the postman though he tried to sit down to work up a nonsense rhyme, at least, while he was waiting. He giggled to himself as he thought of the joke that the nonsense rhyme was to contain. He *almost* ran downstairs to tell Marie Claire how funny it was but he remembered that he ought not to because he ought to work. Then, when he had finished the verse, he hopped up and looked out of the window again—but there wasn't any postman in sight.

So George decided to write a sonnet. This time it was a sad subject—Marjorie said she didn't know just what. It was something that would make you feel that everything had gone against you and nobody but yourself realized how abused you were. It would end up with rose-leaves that were dried in a book, Marjorie said. *They* always were sad.

We watched George write the sonnet. He had to consult his rhyming dictionary several times—a sonnet is a difficult thing to write. By and by he grew so interested in his own sadness that he forgot to watch the clock between times, and when he read aloud the first stanza it was so mournful he had to take out his pocket hand-

kerchief. He remembered how very poor he was, how he had always *hoped* to be rich and own a bull-dog and an automobile. He remembered that he had only *one* suit, and *one* necktie, and *one* hat. He remembered how Marie *had* spoken longingly of a new cloth suit and how Jackie really needed shoes and a carriage, and he remembered the SEVEN rejected manuscripts that had come by yesterday's post—when he remembered *them* he suddenly rushed to the window and put his head out. Why, would you believe it—the postman had already passed the house and was going on up the street!

George simply scooted downstairs two steps at a time. He bounced down on the last step, flung open the mail-box, and sat right down on the doorstep to examine his letters.

"How many 've come back?" I asked Marjorie.

"I don't know," she returned. "I can't count them—*What's* that?"

George had hurriedly torn off the end of a thin envelope that had been hidden under the pile of mail matter. He pulled *something* out and looked at it aghast. He almost fell right over. He gave one great whoop and dashed back into the house making a bee-line for the kitchen. THE VERY LARGE CHECK HAD COME!

Waving the check before him, he burst into the kitchen where Marie was stewing the plum jam upon the cook-stove. She had the big spoon in her hand and she lifted both arms in wide astonishment to see THE VERY BIG CHECK come galloping in with George that way so suddenly. Why, it really was awfully sudden! Nobody had expected it in the least. It was for something George had sent off quite casually about a year ago. He'd lost track of it en-tire-ly! And here was THE VERY BIG CHECK that they had been planning for and dreaming about for so long! It almost took one's breath away! The plum jam actually scorched! Mrs. Wolsen simply had to hug Mr. Wolsen—but then, she always did know

that he'd do something some day. He was a very wonderful man—and then she smelled the scorch of the jam and George quite forgot about THE VERY BIG CHECK, as she felt so badly about the jam that she had to be comforted. And she hadn't any handkerchief, *and his* was upstairs with the mournful sonnet! When he told her this they both had to laugh. Oh, it was simply great to

"Waving the VERY BIG CHECK before him, he burst into the kitchen"

have a VERY BIG CHECK—hurrah, hurrah, hooray! Hurrah, hurrah! Whoop-la! Hooray, HOORAY!

"What shall we do now?"

"Why, *celebrate*, my dear." George replied.

"Oh, what fun!"

"How shall we celebrate, Marie?"

"How? Why, in every way! FIRST, of course, by cashing THE VERY BIG CHECK at once!"

But there was Jackie to be considered. He wasn't dressed to go out yet. He had no shoes on and he had a smutty-smutty spot on his cheek where he had kissed the hod-shovel. So Mrs. Wolsen gathered him in her arms and ran upstairs to wash him, while George went down-town to the bank to get THE VERY LARGE CHECK cashed at once.

"I think, dear, I'll stop and buy the bull-dog on my way home," he said, as he took his hat from the peg to go out. "We'll need a bull-dog now that there's money in the house. There'll be something beside the Venetian vase to worry about and I always did want a bull-dog!" He smiled radiantly and started to close the door but he opened it softly again and peeped in to say, "I'm going to bring *you* a surprise—I'll buy it before I buy the bull-dog! Be ready to go out when I come back and then we'll celebrate!"

The door closed. Mrs. Wolsen was left alone with Jackie. Mr. Wolsen had gone out for a few moments to cash THE VERY BIG CHECK.

CHAPTER IV

MR. GEORGE ABIHAD WOLSEN walked out of the white doll-house with THE VERY BIG CHECK in his pocket. His feet felt very light and his head was in something of a whirl—there were so many plans for celebration in it. As he walked along, he smiled broadly, and he walked right past three persons with whom he had a bowing acquaintance. He never saw them and he never took off his hat at all. They promptly termed him a stuck-up writer-chap who hadn't any manners. But, really, he was not in the least stuck-up. He was simply absent-minded.

He was so absent-minded that he went right around the square where the bank was twice before he suddenly realized *what* he was doing. Then, he was so absent-minded that he went into the next shop instead of going into the bank. He walked over to the cash-window and handed in THE VERY BIG CHECK. The clerk simply stared. He stared so hard that Mr. Wolsen suddenly realized that he'd been absent-minded again. He had been thinking how he would write a wonderful essay *On Success*. He had been trying for the opening sentence when he felt the clerk's very astonished eyes boring into him.

He apologized and took back THE VERY BIG CHECK—which the clerk thought had been handed in by some sort of lunatic, maybe, and he walked *out* of the butcher-shop resolved not to be absent-minded again!

But he had scarcely gone out of the butcher-shop, resolved not to be absent-minded again, when he found the opening sentence of the essay *On Success*. It came to him in a flash: "Success is like

the very big check that comes to an author when he is least expecting it. It is the result of——" and right here George found himself in the Public Library handing THE VERY BIG CHECK to the librarian at the charging desk! He had been absent-minded *again!*

Well, the bank happened to be next door so he said to himself, "Look-out-look-out-look-out-George!" till he reached the paying teller's window. Then he felt safe and he knew he wouldn't be absent-minded again. But he *had been* before he left home, for he'd forgotten his purse. He put his hand way, way down into his trouser-pocket. He looked into all his other pockets the way men do when they've forgotten a ticket on the train, and then he knew that he'd left his purse at home. Yes, it had three one-cent postage stamps in it and it was in the left-hand cubby-hole of the desk.

The bank-clerk asked him if he didn't want to deposit THE VERY BIG CHECK, but George thought he'd just like to know the sensation of having almost unlimited wealth about his person. He thought it would give him some local color when he wrote a story in which there was a millionaire for a hero. There is nothing like experiencing something you are going to write about! But Mr. Wolsen had his first sensation of real riches when he stood at the paying teller's window and realized that all he would need to do would be simply to go over to the shop across the way and *buy* a new purse!—How very simple!

So he rolled up the bills that had composed THE VERY BIG CHECK into a fat wad and put them into his pocket. He was sure they would be safe, but to make assurance doubly sure he kept his fingers on them all the way. He was stepping from the curb when a fine large touring-car honked at him to look out, and instead of being indignant that the idle rich should have the right of way over a citizen who walked on two feet, he thought, "Well, I'll stop in at the automobile shop and price a car on the way home."

He bought his purse, a very handsome one that would last a

life-time. He didn't much know what he paid for it. Then, he reflected that he would buy Marie a *surprise* to take home with him—and then, then he would look up that bull-dog he had so long wanted. But, first, there was Marie's present to buy—WHAT should he get?

Marie had a watch. (It had come in a set of things—necklace, bracelet, watch. Marjorie had given them to her. *She* had bought them with some birthday money.) Marie had—*what* had she? Mr. Wolsen tried to think. At Christmas they each solved the matter of giving each other presents in an easy way. Each bought for the other the thing they each desired: George would buy Marie a smoking-jacket and Marie would buy George a lace waist that was a most unusual bargain. Then, on Christmas-day, they'd exchange.

Of course, George had been in the habit of buying birthday gifts. Usually they were things that Mrs. Wolsen had often expressed a desire to possess. This gift, however, was to be one that was in a way a surprise so he could not possibly think WHAT to get!

Almost anything that *George* brought would have pleased Mrs. Wolsen but George didn't realize that, so he walked aimlessly about the book-shops, and the department stores. He gazed at jewelers' windows till he really felt bewildered. He was looking in a florist's window wondering if she'd like orchids when suddenly he felt a light touch on his elbow AND THERE BESIDE HIM WAS MRS. WOLSEN with Jackie in her arms! She had become tired of waiting for him to come home and she had decided that something must have happened to him! It was almost three o'clock in the afternoon!

Dear me! And how about buying that *surprise* now!

Jackie was rather a heavy baby-doll so George carried him and Marie straightened her hat.

"What were you doing looking in the florist's window?" she inquired.

Humph! Isn't that just the way, when you're buying or going to buy a *surprise!*

"You weren't going to buy me flowers, were you?" Marie interrogated. "If you *were*, George, I can tell you exactly what I want—no, not cut-flowers, something to put on that little stand in the dining-room—a handsome jardiniere filled. Let's go in and select it!"

So in they went. They *could* have had orchids, George reflected. He took out the new pocket-book very grandly and you ought to have seen the clerk step around. He bowed them out of the shop as if they had been Trust Magnates. George made mental note of the bow thinking he could use it in a book sometime.

The potted plant which they had selected and paid for had, of course, been sent home. Mrs. Wolsen would have carried it gladly but George nudged her—it wasn't at all necessary to carry it, but Marie did so love flowers that she was afraid the shop people would forget to send it home in time for tea. She wanted the plant there at tea-time.

Speaking of tea-time made them realize that it *was* almost tea-time. Jackie had had some bread and milk before they started out, but neither Marie nor George had had a mouthful! Both had been so excited over THE VERY BIG CHECK that they'd forgotten entirely.

So they decided to go into a restaurant to have something that was "different." (I suppose they were tired of Toasted Corn-Flakes and plum jam.) George—well, *George* knew how to do things! It was pretty nice. It cost something, too, but George reflected that it was quite worth it. He made a mental note of what it felt like to be able to do "that sort of thing" and decided that

it would prove good literary material some day. It would describe splendidly.

Next, of course, they must go hunt up a bull-dog!

They found an animal store and asked to be shown a bull-dog. —George said he wanted a nice, gentle, quiet one. (When he said that, the clerk just sniffed. "All bull-dogs are nice and gentle, sir," he replied.) He went off and presently came back with one that looked as if his face had been flattened by a steam-roller. He was a very fine dog, the man said, but he made Jackie cry so George wouldn't have him. They tried another all white, but George didn't like one all white. So, next, the man brought one in that was brown. He was a rather large dog. He looked fierce, yet, though his teeth showed, he had a kindly, sweet expression about the eyes. George said the dog reminded him exactly of the dog in Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird*. You could see that the dog took to Jackie, too. And Jackie fairly crowed over the dog. George determined to call the dog Tylô after the *Blue Bird* dog. The man said that his name was Wags.

So George bought the bull-dog that he had always wanted to own! He had to buy a collar, too. The collar was almost as costly as the bull-dog was. It was—well, you never would have imagined that a dog-collar could cost so much!

The dog went with them and they wondered what they would do next. As yet, they had not, of course, celebrated ALL that they intended.

It was too late to go into a movie-show. They weren't particularly anxious to celebrate *that way!* They were wondering if perhaps a nice little trip out-of-town might not be the right thing, when they chanced to pass by a store where a graphophone was playing "Tipperary." It did sound gay.

"I always liked those things," said George.

"So did I," assented Mrs. Wolsen.

"Let's have one!"

"Oh, let's!"

So in they went. And they purchased one that wasn't too high-priced. (Though it cost enough—yes, quite enough when you take into account a big supply of records.) They had it sent home.

After that, they passed a candy shop. George liked candy and so did Marie. They went in and George bought a TEN POUND BOX all decorated with a real hand-painted chrysanthemum tied with pink ribbon— Oh, perfectly *grand!* He gave it to Marie, of *course!*

Then, they went by a hat-shop where Mrs. Wolsen wanted to stop to look at styles. There *happened* to be a gray-green Tipperary hat in the window. It was trimmed with blue forget-me-nots. (You might think forget-me-nots always *blue*, but I mention the color because milliners' flowers are so erratic: there are green roses, for instance, and blue roses too. As for forget-me-nots, sometimes they are black!) Mrs. Wolsen par-tic-u-lar-ly liked *blue* forget-me-nots. When George saw her looking at the hat, he felt of his fat pocket-book and he said:

"Say, Marie, you'd just better have it!" Marie smiled. AND the hat was hers!

Then, to counterbalance the hat for Marie Claire, they got a gilt clock for George's desk. It was a handsome thing with Infant Hercules lifting a dumb-bell upon it—much nicer than strangling a serpent, don't you think?

George wanted a stein, too. He didn't touch anything, but a stein is so picturesque. Its motto was "Lustig ist der Mann der arbeitet." (It was *so* appropriate!)—You must remember George's foreign birth and education.

Well, they stopped in at various shops. It would be quite tiresome to anybody who was not celebrating to hear all that the George A. Wolsens purchased.

There were new sofa cushions for the couch in the study. There was a French doll for Jackie. There were white kid shoes for *him*, too, rattles and that kind of thing—balls. They cost very little, you know.

Then Mrs. Wolsen bought Pussy-Cat a handsome ribbon, and she bought herself a dainty basket to replace the *old* mending basket. Oh, they had a gay, gay time. It *was* a celebration—but, of course, not ALL the celebration. There was to be that trip to the country tomorrow! George had all sorts of folders in his pocket. They would look at these when they reached home.

Then the clock in a church steeple struck six and for the first time in her life Mrs. Wolsen didn't have dinner ready! They hurried home laden with small parcels, and they found the plant and the graphophone waiting. These had been put at the front door, for the house was closed when the Wolsens were away. They had never been rich enough to afford a kitchen maid.

As dinner was not ready, they ate Toasted Corn-Flakes, which are always convenient. And Mrs. Wolsen gave Jackie to George to be put to bed while she opened the parcels in the study and tried on the Tipperary hat. The bull-dog had to have something to eat George suggested, so Marie gave him the rest of the box of Toasted Corn-Flakes. He still seemed hungry—his appetite was E-NOR-MOUS! He and Pussy-Cat did not get on very well. George said that that was capital—"exactly like living in the *Blue Bird*, Marie!" He even suggested that they call the gray cat Tylette.

Well, when Jackie did get quiet, George and Marie sat down beside the table where the lamp-wick that really would turn up *was* turned up.

They beamed radiantly at each other and George spread out his folders, so that they could make a plan about the little trip out-of-town.

Then, Marie Claire, while he was doing that, remembered the

list of things that they had *wanted to buy*. This was the list that had been written over the pages of her wee little note-book on the night previous, when they had only thought of THE VERY BIG CHECK as a long way off.

"We might as well write some letters for these, George," she suggested. "I can do that while you are looking through timetables."

George calculated expenses and then he decided to put his hand into his pocket where the new purse was. It did feel thinner than it *had been!*

"I think——" he began. And his face looked more sober than it had since the time he had written the first stanzas of the sad sonnet—"I think——"

But Marie Claire had intuition. "Is it ALL GONE, dear?" she asked anxiously.

He nodded. "All but twenty cents," he replied.

ALL BUT TWENTY CENTS! Oh, dear!

But Marie Claire was a dear little doll. "What of it?" said she. "This has been a perfectly glorious day and we've had the very best sort of a celebration!" She hid the wee little note-book hurriedly out of sight. "George," she begged, "don't look like that! Go put a record on the graphophone—something awfully gay." While he was doing it, she hid the folders. "We'll have a picnic tomorrow," she declared. "We'll take that TWENTY CENTS and go off on the trolley-car somewhere! It will be a regular spree!"

The music was so irresistible that George laughed. "Oh, well," said he, "I'll write something much better—far better—and the next VERY BIG CHECK will be VERY BIG INDEED. We'll take the little trolley trip tomorrow and end the celebration."

"Marjorie," said I, "let's leave them."

"Well——" began Marjorie reluctantly, but she stopped. "If you want to," she agreed.

"Did you like the bull-dog?"

"*Did* I!"

"Did you like the celebration?"

"Well, *rather!*"

"Aren't the Wolsens perfect dears?"

They were surrounded by all the wonderful things bought with The Very Big Check

"They're the nicest dolls I know!"

"Mother," called Marjorie, "you just ought to see all the things that——"

"That Mr. George Wolsen bought with THE VERY BIG CHECK," I interrupted. "He has a bull-dog and a graphophone, and tomorrow they are going to have a picnic!"

We were not in the Land of Make-Believe any more, so I told Dotty she should have a toy dog some fine day. And then Marjorie and Dotty walked home with me as far as the corner.

CHAPTER V

REALLY when one has been living in the Land of Make-Believe, it is very hard to come back to the everyday realities. I did try to start the biography I had promised to write, but biographies are sometimes dull things. I finally made myself pretend that there was something the matter with my typewriter because I stuck fast after the first paragraph and—oh, I just wanted to play with Marjorie! It was the Day of the Picnic and, of course, I wanted to hear and see all I could of *that!* I was trying to make myself believe that the typewriter needed to go somewhere for repair when I heard Marjorie calling outside of my window, "Aren't you coming? Oh, *aren't* you coming?"

"Oh, dear me! Of course I'm coming! Wait! I'll be there in a jiffy," I called—Oh, yes, I WENT!

Everything was lively in the white doll-house when Marjorie and I reached there. Jackie was making a fearful racket pounding a tin pan with a big wooden spoon. (The pan was all clean and so was the spoon—but just imagine giving a baby such playthings! It was like the hod-shovel incident we had noticed the other day! Why, he had a French doll, and rattles, and the new ball—and nobody knows what-not that had been purchased with THE VERY BIG CHECK! Yet Mrs. Wolsen gave him a wooden spoon and a tin pan to keep him good—one can't say quiet exactly—while she was packing up the lunch.)

Mercy! You ought to have seen the dining-room! It was a SIGHT! There were tissue paper napkins all scattered about—very pretty ones with little Japanese birds on them; there were

jelly glasses, and a butter-dish, and a bowl of salad dressing, and a loaf of bread, and some sandwiches done up in waxed paper and piled on a plate. Then, there were sardines, and cake, and— (Oh, but the CAKE did look good!)

"Did you ever see anything so nice as that cake?" Marjorie inquired.

I eyed it enviously. "Wouldn't you love to eat it?" I suggested. It was so perfect! It looked ex-act-ly like a big chocolate drop! It could so easily have been equally divided between us two The Wolsens really had so *many* things for their picnic! But in the Land of Make-Believe you try not to eat up the picnic before you come to it. We both sighed and waited.

Marie Claire was packing things into the market-basket. There was some fruit that she was afraid to crush and it had to be very gently tucked into the right spot. George was carving a chicken and slicing off the white meat in tempting bits that were to go into the salad. He had one of Mrs. Wolsen's aprons tied about his waist and his coat was cast aside. He did look very funny.

"Do you suppose *this* is enough?" he inquired, pointing with the wee carving-knife to his plateful.

Marie patted a parcel into place in the market-basket and then came over to look. "Oh, yes," she said. "I'll put the chicken back in the ice-chest now. If you like, you can help pick up the things on this table. We're almost ready, aren't we?"

"Did you put in the bone for the bull-dog?" George inquired.

"Oh, dear! I forgot!—*You* go get it! It's done up in brown paper. It's on the shelf over the cellar stairs. I wouldn't put such a thing in the ice-chest! Oh, GEORGE——" but George had dropped the Japanese napkins he was folding and had rushed through to the kitchen, and beyond to the cellar stairs.

He came back with Tylô at his heels barking and Tylette, the cat, mewing piteously in front of his boots.

Mrs. Wolsen laughed. She had to—but it was quite impossible to let that bone go into the lunch basket!

"Why not?" George inquired, somewhat nettled.

"Because," replied Marie Claire in her very gentlest and sweetest tones, "I won't have it! I have never yet put dog-meat in a picnic basket!"

Mr. Wolsen looked at her. "How are we going to carry it?" he asked. "You won't let me put it in the suitcase, I suppose, with the baby's things! It's a perfectly good bone."

"It may be," returned Mrs. Wolsen, "but not from MY point of view. It didn't smell at all nice!"

"Didn't smell *nice!* Why, I saw the man cut it off myself! *I* selected it!"—with the barking of Tylô, and the mewing of Pussy-Cat, and the bang-whang-whang of Jackie with his tin pan, Mr. Wolsen's sniff was not heard.

"It's a perfectly good bone," he insisted. "Of *course,* a dog-bone always does have a little odor but I can't be buying soup-bones at twenty or thirty cents a pound. Dog-meat is per-fectly good. I'll carry it *myself* in my pocket!" With this threat, he jabbed the bone down into his trouser-pocket and walked out of the room.

Well?

Marie Claire knew she was right about it and that George would be more reasonable later. She finished picking things up and she gave the cat a saucerful of milk. Then she went up to see if everything Jackie would need was in the suitcase. There was a pillow. There was an afghan. There was a romper suit. There was a ball made out of red wool. It jingled when you shook it. The pillow took up so much space that there didn't seem place for anything else. She couldn't get the suitcase together!

"George," she called, "do come here and help! You can see

very well that we couldn't possibly have put that dog-bone in *here!*"

And Mr. Wolsen came running. He smiled in a superior way as much as to say, "Oh, *I* could have got it in!" but he tugged and he repacked—and Mrs. Wolsen stood by and *smiled.* At last, however, they managed to close the suitcase together, and George admitted he was wrong; that the bone would not have gone in, and also that he hated to have it in his pocket but he supposed he'd have to——

Then Mrs. Wolsen put on her long pongee coat trimmed with braid—it was the best she had. She tried on the Tipperary hat that George had bought her the day before. She stood at the mirror and surveyed the effect. It didn't go with the pongee cloak at all! Oh, it made the pongee cloak look so *dreadful* that Marie Claire had to take it off and put on her old hat—the hat that cost one dollar and ninety-five cents and was quite out of style! (But George didn't know the difference. He wore *his* old hat too. It was a sailor shape and Mrs. Wolsen reflected that he really did look like a Gibson man in that dark blue suit of his.)

She put the cat in the cellar and took Jackie in her arms. George carried the suitcase and the market-basket—AND the bone, AND his portfolio. The bull-dog trotted after them. George said he followed the bone.

"*Where* are we going?" inquired Marie Claire.

George felt of his pocket—the one that didn't have the bone in it.

"I do believe I've forgotten the TWENTY CENTS," he ejaculated. So Marie and Jackie, the market-basket and the suitcase waited in a drugstore while George went back for the carfare. The bull-dog followed George back. He preferred to follow where the bone went.

When he came back, he felt quite sure that he *had* locked the

front door behind him, but he said he hadn't found out yet where they would go for the picnic—he'd have to ask. He went over to the drugstore counter and talked with the clerk.

"Do you happen to know of a nice trolley ride out into the real country?" he inquired. "We don't care to go too far—just one fare, you know."

The clerk said he *did* happen to know of a very nice trolley ride. "Take the red car marked Mount Riverby," he said. "It stops right at this corner." He seemed like a very nice kind man. He talked to Jackie and commented on the fine sunny weather, and he remarked how very fond the bull-dog seemed to be of Mr. Wolsen.

They did not have to wait long. The car came very quickly and the conductor let the bull-dog on at the rear. He didn't want to be separated from Mr. Wolsen and the bone but Mr. Wolsen tied him with some string that was quite heavy and then went back and sat with Jackie and Marie Claire.

Oh, it was a beautiful ride—a perfectly beautiful ride! George said that the way the trolley-car whizzed along made him think of the Athenian fairy in *Midsummer-Night's Dream:*

"Over hill, over dale,
Through brush, through brier,
Over park, over pale,
Through flood, through fire,
I do wander everywhere——"

"Yes," returned Marie, "but we haven't been through flood or through fire!" (From which one perceives that Marie was a little too matter-of-fact sometimes, with all her humor.)

"There is real romance about a trolley-car," George continued thoughtfully, but he did not finish, for the conductor came around for a second fare! My! Nobody would have dreamed that they

had gone so far already! (It *is* atrocious the way the trolley companies collect fares every five minutes!)

"Oh," said George, "we were just about to get off. Ring the bell, please!" *And* the conductor stopped the car.

Marie seemed a bit uncomfortable but there was a real sparkle

Tylô in his grand new collar frisked happily after the two

in her eyes: "You did *that* splendidly, George! I do hope you have not lost the return fare?"

George laughed and said it was a great lark—and he gave Marie the return fare to tie up in a knot in the end of her handkerchief.

Why, if they had *planned*, they could not have found a more delightful place for a picnic! There was a sloping hillside near a river—oh, simply ideally lovely! Mr. Wolsen carried the market-basket, and the suitcase, his portfolio, and the bull-dog's bone,

while Mrs. Wolsen tripped along over the grass beside him carrying Jackie—and Tylô in his grand collar followed frisking after the two.

They found a delightful spot where there was a wide view of fields and wooded hillsides with the river meandering quietly near by. The sky was blue overhead. There was the softest of fragrant breezes. There was a hum of singing insects in the green grass and far away a little bird trilled.

"How could we have a better celebration than *this!*" George exclaimed. "I am g ad that we spent all of THE VERY LARGE CHECK. There is material here for a whole book of poems!"

"Now, George," declared Marie Claire, "*don't* quote *Omar* —I feel that you may be going to do it! *We* have more than a loaf of bread and a jug of wine— Shall I lay out the picnic?" But George Abihad Wolsen was dreaming a day-dream, and Marie's humor, if it was a joke, was lost upon him. She wrestled with the suitcase, took Jackie's rompers out and dressed him up to crawl about on all fours in the grass. Then, she and Mr. Wolsen sat there happier than they had ever been since THE VERY LARGE CHECK had come.

It would take quite too long a time to tell how Jackie tried to catch grasshoppers; how Tylô discovered a toad; how Mrs. Wolsen laid out the picnic luncheon; how ants *would* crawl over the cloth; how they had to wait for George Abihad to finish a lyric before he would *think* of eating a sandwich; how, when he had eaten one, he kept on eating and eating till he said he felt like writing a food article for a woman's magazine that ran culinary pages; how little Marie Claire laughed and sang; how the bull-dog growled over the bone; how Jackie fell asleep on his pillow finally; how, after a whole day of this beautiful doing-nothing, the sun began to sink and Mr. and Mrs. Wolsen looked at each other to see which was going to say it *was* time to start for home!

Neither one of them said it. Mechanically, Mrs. Wolsen

bundled Jackie into his clean little clothes. Mechanically, George Abihad gathered the things together and took up the empty market-basket and the bulging suitcase. Mechanically, both turned for a last look at the river, the meadow, and the wooded hillsides; and mechanically they walked toward the trolley-car.

"*You* have the ten cents, Marie," George reminded.

"Oh, yes," returned Marie, "you gave it to me and I put it in my handkerchief." She began to fumble in the pocket of her pongee coat—but—THERE WAS NO HANDKERCHIEF THERE!

CHAPTER VI

MARIE CLAIRE hunted wildly in her shirtwaist belt—the handkerchief was not there! The red trolley-car spun past them and still the handkerchief did not come to light.

They set Jackie down on the bank and put the bull-dog to guard him and the suitcase and the market-basket, while Mrs. Wolsen, more and more frantic every moment, bewailed the loss of the carfare home!

"Oh, what shall we do! WHAT shall we do!" she wailed. "The cat's shut up down cellar: it will die if we don't get home! It hasn't had anything to eat all day and oh, dear, dear, dear! Jackie will be going to sleep and there is no place here—and there will be no dinner—" but George suggested that they leave Tylô to guard Jackie and the things in a sheltered spot and then that the two of them go back together to see if they might find the handkerchief that held the last of THE VERY BIG CHECK.

They went very slowly and they looked *very* carefully but they did not find Mrs. Wolsen's pocket-handkerchief with its knotted end. Whatever George *thought*, he kept it to himself; for poor Marie Claire was almost at the point where she would begin to cry and George simply couldn't bear to see her cry. It always made him want to cry too—twice as hard!

Well, they didn't find the handkerchief! It wasn't in the field at all; it wasn't where they had picnicked on the hillside. George felt sure that Marie had gone to pick up a stick one time to play with the bull-dog. He said it was somewhere over by that path,

and as he thought she might have dropped the handkerchief while playing with Tylô, they walked over toward the spot. When they reached there, they saw an artist sketching in the near-by field, and as they hadn't located the handkerchief at all, George said they'd go over and ask the artist whether he had happened to pick such a thing up. They followed the path up the hill to the sloping meadow

The artist stood before his easel painting the picture of a lamb

where the artist stood before his easel painting a white lamb. He was an odd sort of fellow. He wore a loose blouse, and a floppy tie. His linen trousers were of a strange kind of cut, and his boot-toes turned inward. But it was a very beautiful picture that he was painting, Mrs. Wolsen thought. George himself was interested in its color scheme. He knew more about Art than Marie Claire.

They stood for some time behind the artist afraid to interrupt his work, but the artist painted on and on—a dab of blue here and

a dab of blue there. Finally, George cleared his throat and broke the silence. The artist didn't seem surprised to hear a voice behind him. Evidently he had known they were there watching him the whole time!

"How-do!" said George.

"How-do!" returned the artist.

"You are painting a beautiful picture," Mrs. Wolsen remarked. The artist regarded it with his head perked over to one side.

"I am *trying* to," he replied. "It's work!"

"I'm afraid that we interrupted," Mr. Wolsen suggested politely, and he was about to introduce the subject of the lost handkerchief when the artist turned abruptly quite about and faced him. "See here," said he, "I don't mind being interrupted. I believe, 'If you cannot leave your picture at any moment, cannot turn from it, and go on with another, while the color is drying, you have not a firm grasp of it.'—This holds true if you leave your picture to talk to a stranger who's admired it!" He grinned. (Indeed, he seemed a pleasant and cultured person even though his appearance was against him.)

"I wish I could feel that way about being interrupted," Mr. George Abihad Wolsen declared. "I'm a writer. When I'm interrupted at work the spirit of the thing is lost! It's *gone!* When I come back to my story or my—whatever I'm doing—I feel as if I should have to get up steam all over again. That's the difference between the artist in words and the artist in painting. Yet the two have many things in common."

"Well," began the artist, but the lamb he was painting had become tangled in its tether and he stopped abruptly. "I've other things to interrupt me," he suggested, as he unwound the rope. "My name's John Noggins."

Mrs. Wolsen bowed and George Wolsen bowed. George explained who they were and the painter chap, John Noggins, said

he'd made up his mind that Mr. Wolsen was a writer when he first saw him. He was very unconventional and outspoken.

Mrs. Wolsen seemed a bit uneasy. George would have forgotten all about the lost carfare, probably, if she hadn't given him a meaning look as Mr. Noggins took up his palette knife to scrape *something* somewhere on the canvas.

So Mr. Wolsen broached the subject. "I wonder if you noticed a handkerchief anywhere about—" he suggested. "My wife and I were picnicking hereabouts today and she lost one. It had a knot in one end. We came up here thinking she might have dropped it around here somewhere. It HAPPENED to be rather a valuable one."

John Noggins shook his head. "Nope," he returned. "Haven't seen it *here!* Wish I had for I'd been glad to restore it. Lucky my lamb isn't a goat or I'd have suspected *him* of being guilty—a lamb, however, is a tame animal except when he gets tangled in his tether —a lamb is never suspected of being wicked—a lamb is a poetic creature, paintable, docile, and he tastes good when he grows up and you have him at your boarding-house three times a week maybe." Really, he might have gone on and on in this perfectly idiotic strain if Mrs. Wolsen had had any thought besides that of getting back to Jackie! She had been wondering what they *were* going to do and suddenly she just said, "Oh, George, *you* stay and hunt around a little. I *must* see if Jackie is all right—"and she ran off.

Then George Abihad Wolsen had an IDEA. "Say," said he, "see here, Noggins, did you ever happen to spend your last cent?"

Noggins jumped up into the air and waved his palette—"Vive le last cent!" he flourished. "Je habe that done—did you ever know an artist who knew how to save his last cent!"

Mr. Wolsen laughed. "We are akin," he stated. "Yesterday I had a VERY BIG CHECK and I went out to cash it——"

"Dear Boy! Don't tell me any more! I know what hap-

pened," the artist grinned. "I perceive tragedy, comedy, history, all jumbled into one!"

"You have it," Mr. Wolsen laughed. "We came here today to celebrate with our last twenty cents—oh, we have had a perfect day of it! I've whole volumes of verse—local color enough to stock up a descriptive romance where the hero is a nature-lover and the heroine a country girl. Then, when we'd decided that the frolic was over, my wife lost her handkerchief. Its corner was knotted—you know the way some girls do—it contained in the knot ten cents, our blessed CARFARE HOME!"

John Noggins slapped his knee and roared. George slapped *his* and roared too. Then the artist fished in his pocket for fifty cents and handed it to George Abihad Wolsen.

"Allow me to lend you this," he grinned. "I just happen to have it!"

"Oh, I don't want all that!" George protested. He quite insisted on the artist's taking it back. "Ten cents," he laughed, "and I'll be your friend for life! Do come in and see us when you're in town. We'd love to know you better! Ever do illustrating?"

"Sure," returned the artist. "But the art editors——"

"Editors are *all* alike," George broke in but he stopped short in surprise. He was about to launch out in a lecture that should relieve his feelings about editors when he saw Marie come running up the path with Jackie in her arms.

"Oh, OH!" she wailed, "do come quick and whistle—WHISTLE!—I can't WHISTLE! The bull-dog has run away!"

CHAPTER VII

"THEY have the carfare home anyway!" said Marjorie. "But think of losing the bull-dog like that after George had been wanting one so long! Do you suppose they'll *ever* find him?"

"I don't know," I replied doubtfully. "I always have to hunt up my bull-dog when he runs away. Maybe he'd come back home by himself, but I feel safer about him if I hunt him up. He might so easily be run over by an automobile. He has no sense at all about automobiles! I hope the Wolsens' dog knows that a motor-car does actually GO!"

"Maybe he'll follow the trolley-line as far as the drugstore and then he'll know his way home."

"Maybe!"

Then Marjorie fell to whistling vigorously and I whistled too. We did so want to help George and Marie find Tylô!

"Look! Look!" I exclaimed. "There he is! Isn't that he —the scamp?" We were sitting before the big white doll-house when Tylô came jogging along the street in a most matter-of-fact way and settled himself upon the door-step as if he'd been there hours. He even looked a bit bored as if he were tired of waiting!

Mr. Wolsen was in the study telephoning to the police head-quarters:

"Hello, hello! Is this the Chief of Police?"—There was a slight pause.—"Oh, excuse me!" said Mr. Wolsen apologetically. "The County Orphan Asylum, did you say! Well, it's a mistake. I'm after the Chief of Police!" He jigged the little telephone rest up and

down calculating to make the telephone operator's ears dizzy. "I want 1-3-13-ring 3," he demanded. "Hello—I've lost a *valuable* bull-dog, license number 44223, 1916. I'm Mr. George ABIHAD Wolsen, number Thirteen, Marjorie Place. His collar has his name on it, Tylô. Let me know if any of your men locate him. I'll run down and get him." He hung up the receiver.

'Better telephone to the newspaper, too," Mrs. Wolsen suggested. She had come in through the open door, having put Jackie to bed. She stood for a moment near the window looking out into the street. She seemed rather tired, I thought—the anxiety about Jackie, and the carfare, and then the excitement over the loss of Tylô, maybe!

"Why, George ABIHAD Wolsen," she exclaimed suddenly, as Mr. Wolsen was right in the midst of a talk with the advertising department of the newspaper Lost and Found column, "if *that* isn't your dog right there on the door-step this minute! He's jumping up on the postman again!"

The door banged after Mr. Wolsen.

"Oh, I hope it didn't wake up Jackie," Mrs. Wolsen murmured. She peeped into the other room softly. All was quiet. The little Snookums was fast asleep. She tiptoed downstairs to where the postman was growling over the bull-dog and the bull-dog was barking and wagging over George. "Oh, really, Mr. Gray," she soothed, "he won't bite. It's simply play. He likes you. He wouldn't bite a soul. He's very kind!"

The postman, Mr. Gray, said that it mustn't happen again or he'd leave the mail in the street—awfully horrid of him, but you couldn't exactly blame the man for being cross. The bull-dog had made a muddy paw-mark right on his coat-sleeve! She held Tylô by the collar struggling till the postman was out of sight. George was examining his mail. There was a letter for Marie from her mother, too—and a postal from Cousin Binkie.

George's mail was mostly returned manuscripts. He examined it quietly.

Mrs. Wolsen read her mother's letter and then Cousin Binkie's card.

"Well, well!" she exclaimed, "what do you think Cousin Binkie says! She says it would be better for you to give up your writing and go into some *business*. She says keeping a boarding-house is more re-mun-er-a-tive! She ends up by saying that poets, and authors, and artists could all make money if they'd give up Art and start really good boarding-houses!" Mrs. Wolsen glanced up to meet Mr. Wolsen's rather melancholy gaze fixed on Cousin Binkie's postal.

"I think she's right," he said. "Here—look at all these perfectly good manuscripts, ten of them back! Here's *one* that's been out at least forty times and it's GOOD! I'm in debt to Mr. Noggins for ten cents carfare—we *could* run a boarding-house or let rooms or something, couldn't we? And I could keep on writing just the same," he added.

"WHY, GEORGE!" Mrs. Wolsen exclaimed, "in this small house!"

"I don't see why not," Mr. Wolsen insisted.

"WHERE could we put boarders?"

Mr. Wolsen considered. He did not reply.

"Would you give up your study?"

"Well, if I did, where would I write?"

Mrs. Wolsen considered this time.

"The attic is very nice and quiet," she said.

"The desk wouldn't go there—it's too large!"

"Well, then, we can't keep a boarding-house, can we?"

This was something like proving a problem in algebra. Nothing more was said. George busied himself with his rejected manuscripts.

"I believe," said he, "I'll run out and remail these. I have some stamps upstairs." So he trotted up to the study. Fancy giving up the study to a boarder!

Mrs. Wolsen unpacked the picnic things and the suitcase. Then she gave a surprised scream, for there, on top of Jackie's pillow, was her handkerchief with the ten cents knotted in one end!

Mr. Wolsen paused before the post-box with his manuscript envelopes

The front-door had banged, so she knew George must have gone to the mail-box. She went to the window intending to wave it when he should come back. She saw the grocer's boy, Bill, stopping his cart near the corner to deliver a basketful of things to the people next-door. She saw Mr. Wolsen stop before the mail-box and look over his manuscripts in a forlorn way—she was sorry for poor dear George. He did have such bad luck sometimes!—She saw an odd little man stop at the post-box where George was so woefully

looking at his envelopes. The odd little man had long light hair, very fuzzy. He had a smile that was as radiant as sunlight. Even in the gathering twilight Mrs. Wolsen could see the gladness of that smile! He was going to post a long envelope—A LONG ENVELOPE! It looked like a manuscript envelope! He and George seemed to have become acquainted. They stayed at the post-box an eternally long time. Mrs. Wolsen was burning to show George the handkerchief. She waited at the window, watching.

They talked, and they talked, AND they talked. George began to laugh. Then, finally, they turned together and walked toward the house arm in arm. WHAT did it mean? Mrs. Wolsen was very sure she had never before seen that odd little man—surely never! She did not wave the handkerchief at the window. It was growing rather dark too. She could hear them talking and laughing on the steps before the front-door. WHAT did it mean? WHY didn't George bring him in? She lit the lamp and waited.

Presently the voices ceased. The front-door opened. George came in beaming.

"I just made the acquaintance of a re-mark-able MAN," said he. "He's a poet. His name is Peter Piper. I met him at the mail-box and we got into conversation over a pink rose. He saw my manuscript envelopes and perceived that I, too, WROTE. He asked me if I would tell him what color it really was—what exact shade! He said *he* thought it was the color of strawberry ice-cream, but could I, maybe, tell him what shade of pink strawberry ice-cream was? He wanted to write a rondeau about that rose. He said that ALL he could think of was the color of the strawberry ice-cream that they had at his boarding-place on Sundays. He said he wished that he could only find some nice attic somewhere about—the room he had at the boarding-place was too unpoetical. Its furniture was all of the gingerbread kind ornamented with knobs. He wanted a simple *attic* where he would have the right surround-

ings to write verse. He felt sure that if he didn't have the gingerbread furniture to look at, he would have no trouble at all with his rhymes!"

"Dear me," laughed Mrs. Wolsen. "How funny!—and, oh, I found the carfare and——"

But George interrupted. "Marie," he said, "it really is funny about the handkerchief—I dare say you found it in your suitcase! BUT I'll tell you something funnier *yet:* I HAVE ENGAGED TO RENT OUR ATTIC TO PETER PIPER. He's going to send his box tomorrow and he's tickled to death!"

Mrs. Wolsen flung up her hands in dismay! "Why didn't you consult *me*," she wailed. "Why, we haven't any furniture to go up there except that old cot and the iron wash-stand!"

"He said he preferred a cot—and he just wanted a soap-box to use as a chair. He wouldn't come in to look at the room. He said he knew it would be all right, if it was in *our* house, because we were literary people and *understood*."

"But you wouldn't take money for that attic room, would you, George?"

"Why, Marie," said George. "Of course not—I'm just—just renting—I—I—mean *giving*—giving it to him for *nothing!*"

CHAPTER VIII

"THE very idea of Mr. Wolsen's giving up the attic to the Poet without asking rent!" Marjorie exclaimed. "Why, I think Mrs. Wolsen ought to tell the Poet that he can't come!"

"But if one has made a promise, Marjorie——"

"Well, he *ought* to have asked Marie!"

"Yes, he *ought* to have asked Marie!"

"She was rather good about it, *I* think——"

"Yes—of course George realized, afterward! He was carried away by his feelings. That's his temperament!"

It was night now in the Land of Make-Believe. It was so dark that Marjorie and I knew it was that very black hour which comes just before dawn. We had to wait for it to become morning, so we began to talk of other things.

"Marjorie," I questioned, "have you published this month's number of THE MONTHLY POST yet?"

"Oh, yes—Mother typewrote it for us Saturday."

"What's in it?"

Marjorie considered—just as if she didn't know and had to take time to remember.

" 'Contents,' " she quoted: " 'Editorial, Current Events, Adventures of Judy the Second——' "

"Who's the story about 'Judy the Second' by?"

"Marjorie Candee," replied Marjorie. "It was about Dotty's little chicken. Next, there is a verse by Mark—one called *Gardens*——"

"What is it?"

Marjorie cleared her throat:

"Hurrah for the gardens, they're growing!
Hurrah for the boys who've been hoeing!
Hurrah for the seeds—they've outgrown the weeds,
And, now, they make a good showing!"

"That's pretty good! You twins must have ever so much fun writing stories and verses together! I suppose Mr. Wolsen and the Poet, Peter Piper, feel almost the same way about each other. They'll have a good time together—I'm rather glad that he *is* going to be in the attic! Won't it be interesting! I never heard of a doll poet before, did you?"

Marjorie giggled. "He looks as if he might be one with that hair, and that necktie, and that coat, and the white stockings—and that smile! But I thought poets were usually thin and sad, aren't they?"

"Not modern poets—Isn't it day *yet?*"

"Mercy!" exclaimed Marjorie, "Why, I'd almost forgotten!—Yes! It's about eight o'clock. The Wolsens have breakfasted."

We peeped into the doll-house. George was tying the bull-dog outside the kitchen-door so that he should not annoy the postman when he arrived with rejected manuscripts and rejection slips. Marie Claire was busy putting things to rights. She had been up early to look at the attic. Before breakfast, George had carried a rug up there and a nice easy-chair. Then the little cot had been put up, and there was a table too—oh, the attic looked very cosy when everything was done!

Peter Piper arrived just as the postman whistled at the front-door. He carried a soap-box under one arm and in the other he hugged an old kettle in which a small rose-bush had been planted. The rose-bush was rather dilapidated. It had one bud—rather

pinkish. It did not seem very thrifty. Mr. Wolsen greeted him and introduced him to Mrs. Wolsen in the study. Then Mr. Wolsen showed him up to the attic that had been so nicely arranged for his comfort.

"My landlady has my box," he explained. "She won't let it go because I owe her two months' board. I offered her an autographed poem to pay for it—it was worth more than the rent but she wouldn't take it!—She *wouldn't* take it! She said it wasn't worth a cent! THINK of having to live in such an environment as that!"

Mr. Wolsen inquired what could be done about the box.

"Done about it," the Poet echoed, "why, she can keep it, if she wants to! I have a few things in my *other* box that I have with me. A poet needs little—just an attic," he smiled.

The rent didn't seem to worry him in the least!

"Do you mind if I move the table and the arm-chair out of here?" he asked. "I always sit on the cot when I write and I use my box for a desk. It's much simpler—I love simplicity!"

Just here, there was a racket on the stairs and up came Bill, the grocer's boy, tugging a large wooden chest. The Poet threw up his hands:

"My box, my BOX!" he exclaimed. "HOW did you get it from her?"

"She sent it. She said for me to say you might as well have the old thing— Say, but I don't like her, do you?" Bill inquired. "Glad to do it for *you*, Mr. Piper!"

Mr. Wolsen went downstairs in a meditative frame of mind. He began to realize that he had a PROBLEM to consider: *did* the Poet expect to have his board given free of charge? Hadn't he just *let* his attic—no, it wasn't even 'let,' was it—hadn't he just *given up* his attic to Mr. Piper? There had been no mention of table accommodation! Did the Poet take this for granted? Mr. Wolsen wondered what way he should meet the PROBLEM tactfully. He

did not like to worry Marie and so he waited restlessly for twelve o'clock. He could not work. His thoughts centered about Mr. Peter Piper and his own predicament. He tore up sheets of paper that he had written, for he was very much worried and could not write.

At about eleven Mr. Wolsen heard Bill come down the attic stairs and Peter Piper with him. The steps passed the landing. Mr. Peter Piper had gone out.

Still, the PROBLEM was unsolved!

At eleven-thirty the Poet came back. He had been up there in the attic just about ten minutes when George smelt something cooking. It smelt like bacon! The Poet must have a little alcohol stove up there! George hoped he would set nothing afire—but the PROBLEM was solved! The Poet evidently intended to cook his own meals. Mr. Wolsen was so relieved that his heart became suddenly light. He snatched a new clean sheet of typewriting paper and inserted it in his machine. He had a sudden inspiration! His opening sentence carried him on and on! His theme developed as by magic—he wrote and wrote: click-click-click-click-click-click, click-click, click-click,—DING! Click-click-click-click-click-click! DING! Suddenly he felt somebody standing behind him, and he turned around. There was the Poet. He held a sheet of foolscap toward George. On it was scrawled something in ink. Beneath this there was a signature, an autograph!

"Dear Friend," said the Poet, "I have here a very simple little token of my esteem—will you accept it? I have just written a drama in blank verse. This is one of the quotations that I like best. When the drama succeeds, you shall be paid ten-fold for the rent of the attic. Let's shake hands!"

They shook hands warmly—even though Mr. Wolsen had a growing distrust of the great worth of the Poet's blank verse.

'Piper," he asked, "why don't you try some light society

jingles? That's what magazine editors are after. You ought to be able to dash off a few in no time. They pay well for pot-boilers."

"Why don't *you* do them?" the Poet asked.

But Mr. Wolsen shook his head. "The editors won't take *mine*," he confessed.

"I just sent off the poem about the rose," the Poet beamed. "You remember?—I called the strawberry-pink color the color of a dead wild rose—don't you think that's rather good?"

Mr. Wolsen fidgeted. "Yes," he answered absently. He wasn't in the habit of being interrupted in his morning's work. It was rather hard! He wondered how he could get the Poet out of the study without hurting his feelings. It was Pussy-Cat who solved the difficulty. She came mewing into the room through the half-open door.

"Oh, what a glorious feline!" exclaimed the Poet. "Such a cat had the immortal Whittington—'Turn again! Turn again, said the great bell of Bow.' "

The Poet made an attempt to pet pussy. Pussy made an attempt to evade him. She went back through the open door into the hall in as rapid a manner as was dignified. The Poet ran after her. There was a struggle in the hall. Then Peter Piper poked his shock of fuzzy long hair through the open door into the study. He smiled a radiant smile.

"I've caught your pussy," he explained, something all claws and yowls wiggling in his arms. "I'm going to take her up to MY attic and then I shall start an ODE TO WHITTINGTON'S CAT." He disappeared. The door of the attic slammed. George started on with his interrupted manuscript—somehow the zest of the thing was *gone!* And then the alarm clock went off with a buzz. (They had put the gilt clock with the Infant Hercules in the dining-room. The old alarm clock did very well for George's desk, after all.) It was almost the only time Mr. Wolsen had not taken its alarm for his

typewriter bell. He knew it was lunch time and he left his unfinished work and started toward the dining-room.

Marie seemed surprised to see him. She didn't say much about the Poet. But after they had finished eating, she wondered whether Mr. Piper mightn't enjoy a little of that pudding they had had?

George said he thought the Poet *would*. So Mrs. Wolsen arranged a dainty tray with a steaming dish of pudding and plenty

The Poet held an inky sheet upon which was scrawled a poem

of sweet sauce. She tripped up the attic stairs with it to the Poet's room and knocked. She found him standing beside the cot, the gray cat comfortably curled near its pillow. He held an inky sheet of paper in his hand. Close to his feet was the soap-box and on it was an ink-bottle with a goose-quill pen sticking upright in it. On a wooden chest near by stood a forlorn rose plant. Truly, Mrs. Wolsen's heart—which was a soft one—was touched. She not

only gave him the pudding but she offered advice about the rose.

"It looks to me as if there were a worm in the pot," she suggested.

The Poet regarded the plant affectionately. "The Rose-Tree and the Worm—what a good subject for a symbolic interpretation of Good and Evil," he mused. His eyes were on the rose plant, but he fingered the fork that was on the tray, waiting for Mrs. Wolsen to go before he should sit down upon his cot to eat.

Mrs. Wolsen was a woman of perception. She left him there. She knew he would probably let the cat lick the plate. (But it could be sterilized.) "He *did* like that pudding ever so much," she thought. As she passed the study she heard George busy at work, click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click, DING, click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click, DING. He was making up time for interruptions. On the study-door there was a placard pinned up with thumb-tacks,

PLEASE DON'T INTERRUPT UNLESS NECESSARY.

CHAPTER IX

THE rest of the day everything was so quiet in the white doll-house that Marjorie and I decided to go to take a walk. We went down to the garden to look at Mark's chickens. He had been off studying birds. He had seen a bobolink and a meadow-lark to list in his nature study note-book. I congratulated him upon his latest contribution to THE MONTHLY POST and together we looked through its pages.

"I'd like to go back and see what the Poet is doing in his attic now," Marjorie suggested, when we had read all the Editorial Comment, and Current Events, and the stories that were in the latest number of the little paper that Marjorie and Mark wrote and edited. "If the Poet keeps the cat up there, the Wolsens will be sure to have mice in the pantry!"

"Mice!" I exclaimed, drawing my skirt close—"Oh, Marjorie, don't tell me that there are MICE in the big white doll-house! I'll never play near there again!" We all enjoyed the joke—who's afraid of a mouse anyway!

And so we went back to see what was happening at the Wolsens'. It was evening in the Land of Make-Believe. The Poet had had his meager supper of crackers and cheese. His candle flickered in the draught from the attic sky-light. He was lying on the cot covered with a red blanket. The gray cat was comfortably curled at his feet, purring. Peter Piper was reading Milton's *Paradise Regained.*

Downstairs in the bed-room Jackie was fast asleep. Tylô was stretched out on the rug in front of his master's desk. On that

floor all was darkness, except for the light that was turned low in the hall near the stairs.

On the first floor all seemed still. There was no light either in kitchen or pantry. The dining-room, too, was dark! WHERE were Mr. and Mrs. George Wolsen? WHERE!

Marjorie glanced at the clock in the dim light of the bed-room. It was half-past ten in the evening.

The latch-key turned in the front-door, just at this moment, and in came George and Marie. They had been out for an hour's diversion at the near-by motion picture theatre. George needed a little recreation, Mrs. Wolsen thought. Besides *that*, there was to be a Mary Pickford play. George struck a match on his trousers and soon the study was cosily lit by the little doll-lamp-that-had a-real-wick-that-would-turn-up-and-light.

"Sometime," declared Mr. Wolsen as he hunted for the evening paper, "I'm going to write an essay on Motion Picture Music —tum-rum-rum-rum when the Indians are going to be introduced and Rubinstein's Melody in F when the hero walks in the beautiful garden."

"Let's do it together," Mrs. Wolsen exclaimed. "Let's begin now! I'll find a pencil——"

"I'm HUNGRY," Mr. Wolsen interrupted.

"Well, why don't you go down to the pantry and find something! The chicken's there—and there's cake——"

"No, you go," Mr. Wolsen begged. "I haven't an idea where anything is!" He laughed jokingly.

So Marie Claire took the candle and went down to the kitchen. My, how dark it was! She stumbled over a footstool in the dining-room while finding the plates and the tray. She thought it must be Pussy-Cat, at first—then, she realized that it wasn't. The cat was upstairs in the attic with the Poet, of course.

She busied herself preparing the supper-tray. She left it in

the dining-room while she went for the chicken and the cake that were in the pantry. She had taken the platter of chicken from the ice-chest and the cake from the closet, when suddenly something started out of a corner and skuttled across the pantry floor—IT WAS A MOUSE!

Mr. Wolsen heard a shriek. He heard another!

"HELP! HELP!" screamed Marie Claire.

By this time George was running downstairs two steps at a

"Marie Claire was standing on a chair, crying, 'Scat! SCAT!'"

time. As he passed through the hall, he grabbed a golf-stick in one hand and a tennis-racket in the other. (He never went about armed.) Was it a burglar!

When he reached the pantry, he found Marie Claire standing on a chair, crying, "Scat—Oh, scat! SCAT!" In one hand she held her candle, in the other the skirt of her frock. Already the pantry

floor was covered with things that had been thrown down at the MOUSE. There was a little book, and a glass bottle in which peanut-butter had been packed. There was a bouquet of flowers that Cousin Binkie had sent. How these all happened to be near enough to Marie Claire for her to reach them and throw them at the MOUSE, George didn't know. He did not question! Golf-stick in hand, he pursued the mouse around the pantry while Marie Claire shrieked and cried "Scat, scat!" It was most exciting!

At last the mouse escaped through a hole, nobody could quite imagine how or where. Marie Claire could not be pursuaded that it HAD gone, but finally she decided that it *had*, and she was induced to come down off the chair and into the dining-room. George carried the cake and the chicken and then together they went upstairs with the tray, laughing.

"It would have made a fine motion picture," George declared with his mouth full of cake.

"Splendid," agreed Marie Claire.

Then both laughed at the remembrance.

"Do you know," suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Wolsen, "I forgot about Cousin Binkie's flowers. She sent them over late this afternoon. I put them in the ice-chest, and when I went for the chicken I took them out. I was going to put them on the tray to carry upstairs. I put them in the ice-chest so they'd stay fresh—and they're downstairs on the pantry floor! Oh, go and get them—the MOUSE may eat them and they are lovely! I ought not to have thrown them but they did come so handy——"

George grinned. Obediently he walked downstairs, helping himself on the way to a new slice of cake. He came back very soon with the flowers that the MOUSE had not eaten up and this is what he said: "THIS is good enough for a story. I'm going to write it up!"

"Do," urged Marie Claire, putting the flowers into a vase,

"but I didn't tell you what Cousin Binkie said in the note she sent me with the flowers. I meant to tell you, but there was the dinner to get, and the dishes to wash, and Jackie to put to sleep—and then the hurry of starting in time to have good seats at the motion pictures—Cousin Binkie said that she was sending us a prospective boarder. She said *it* was a Very Rich Maiden Lady who was musical. She's a friend of Cousin Binkie's—WHAT SHALL WE DO ABOUT IT!"

CHAPTER X

IT was for quite a long time after the incident of the MOUSE that I failed to see Marjorie. Several things came up, as they do in everyday life, to keep us apart. Marjorie had to go to school. I had to work hard upon a manuscript that had to be done and, until it was done, we did not meet except for a minute or two now and then—which hardly counted.

However, in the times when we did meet, even though these were brief, I learned some interesting facts about what happened when Cousin Binkie's friend called to inquire about board.

In the first place, both George and Marie decided to take her They *could* give up their room and use the study. It would be something of an inconvenience—but Cousin Binkie's friend would pay board. That was something one could rely upon when the editors rejected manuscripts.

Next, I learned that the editor of THE WEEKLY WELCOME had published the article on pet cats and was going to send a check sixty days after publication. (Cousin Binkie's friend did *not* come the next day. She came the day following, about four o'clock in the afternoon. She came in a great touring car.)

Cousin Binkie's friend's name was Miss Genevieve Sweet. She seemed rather a pleasant sort of person—perhaps a trifle reserved, Mrs. Wolsen thought. She was rather small and thin. She had very dark hair that was glossy black. It was worn parted and looked delightfully old-fashioned. But if her hair was worn in a picturesque and individual style, her clothes were like everybody else's. They were *more* in style than Mrs. Wolsen's. Mrs. Wol-

sen still wore very tight skirts, but Miss Genevieve Sweet had the flaring silhouette which was the very latest word from abroad. (I longed to see Miss Genevieve Sweet. I told Marjorie so. She said, "You ought to see her *hats* too!")

Really, when all these things were happening, I *did* want to go to see the white doll-house. I heard that Miss Sweet was going to move in—and I had, alas! to stay at home and finish that article! I felt like poor Mr. Wolsen. HE was writing a Novel! Yes, a NOVEL! There was a prize offered for the best one and the firm of Bracton, Brown & Sons was engaged to publish it. Oh, I did SO want to see George writing a novel! Marjorie said that his study looked even more literary than before.

"HOW do they *manage* in the study?" I inquired.

"Oh, they manage very well," Marjorie answered. "They've moved things around a little."

"And is the Poet still there?"

"Oh yes!—AND do you know what?"

"WHAT?"

"Why, once a day, he comes down to meals. Mrs. Wolsen invited him herself. (He's *so* good to Pussy-Cat!) Sometimes he comes to breakfast; sometimes to lunch; sometimes he chooses to come to dinner. It depends——"

"WHAT does it depend upon?"

"Oh, ever so many things," mused Marjorie. "For instance, if it's a dark day he stays abed till noon, and sometimes he prefers to have lunch alone. Or, maybe, if he thinks he'll saunter out awhile in the morning, for the sake of inspiration, why, then he goes down to breakfast and *writes things* when he comes in."

I wanted to know ever so much more—but there was *that* article not finished yet! And then the next time I saw Marjorie she was on her way to do an errand and in a great hurry, so we didn't

even mention Mr. and Mrs. George ABIHAD Wolsen. There wasn't time!

I telephoned over to Marjorie's as soon as there came a chance after this.

"Hello!" said I, "is this Marjorie?"

"No," came the answer.

"Then it's Mark!" (I *can* always tell a voice over the wire!)

"Where's Marjorie?" I asked.

"Up playing with the white doll-house."

"Can't she come here—just a minute?"

"I'll see."

I held the wire and waited.

Presently came Marjorie's voice, "Yes. It's I! Have you sent off that old article?"

"Most—it's going soon. It isn't an '*old article.*' It is quite new and original. What's happening in the white doll-house?"

"EVERYTHING!"

"You don't say! Tell me all about it!"

"George has sold two manuscripts—the checks actually came promptly. They paid the grocery account."

"Oh," I interrupted. "I thought The Rich Lady's board was to do *that!*"

"BUT," came Marjorie's voice, "don't you realize that it was rather a big one?"

I admitted that it must have been.

"I suppose George is still at work over the novel," I suggested.

"Oh, yes! He simply rushes through meals and runs back to the study. He's on the two-hundredth page. It's growing in-tense-ly ex-cit-ing."

"When is he going to send it in?"

"I don't know."

"Why don't you know?"

"*Because,*" explained Marjorie's voice, "it's noisy sometimes in the room next door—didn't you know about *that!*"

"WHAT?"

"Why, Miss Sweet has a piano!"

"Oh you don't say so! Poor George!"

"Isn't it unfortunate!" I could hear Marjorie's sigh a quarter of a mile distant.

"Does she practice singing or is it merely exercises with fingers?"

"Sometimes one and sometimes the other. She's *very* musical in-deed—— BUT that isn't the worst! The worst is——"

But right here at this most exciting moment, the wire buzzed and I couldn't hear a word more! "Hello, hello!" I called. "Hello is that *you*, Marjorie?—HELLO!" No answer came—Oh, how very provoking! I scarcely slept at all that night wondering what the dreadful thing could be that prevented Mr. Wolsen's doing his work on the novel.

Bright and early I was out next morning to mail my article. It was a Saturday, and on my way home I stopped at Marjorie's house. I simply had to find out about The Rich Lady and learn what the dreadful thing *was!* Marjorie came running to the door and together we rushed upstairs to the white doll-house.

Bow-wow-wow! Yep-gr-r-r! Wow-gr-r-r-r! Wuff!

"Oh, dear! That isn't Tylô, is it?" I asked as we seated ourselves on the floor. There had not yet been time to see what the barking and snarling was about.

Of course it wasn't Tylô. The bark was far too tenor for Tylô. He was bass. And then I saw WHAT the dreadful thing was to which Marjorie had referred on the previous evening. The yapping came from the room that had been given over to Miss Genevieve Sweet. It was—it was a white woolly dog, a snappy-yappy white woolly dog! He was standing on his hind-feet looking out of the window, and I suppose he may have seen something or other that he

thought he ought to bark about. I knew the kind of dog—it doesn't take much to make it bark! It was shut up in The Rich Lady's room. Mercy, what a room it had become: the couch was covered with silk pillows; there was a tea-table with a shining kettle —such an ex-pen-sive kind, too! The room didn't suggest a bedroom. It was quite like a parlor, except for the bureau and the pin-cushion. While I was looking at it all, the door opened and The Rich Lady who was Cousin Binkie's friend unlatched the hall door and entered the room. THAT, then, was what the yapping of the woolly white dog had meant. He had seen his mistress coming up the street!

"Oh, Curly-wurly-tootsie-dear," cried The Rich Lady. "Was the little doggie lonesome! Was it then!" She let him jump upon her cloak but finally, when there was a chance to lay it aside, he snapped at her as she was petting him. "Naughty doggie!" she admonished, still continuing to pet him. Then she went to a box and took out a red ribbon, a VERY EX-PEN-SIVE WIDE RIBBON, and she tied it on his collar. After this, she unwrapped various little parcels she had laid down on the couch with her hat and cloak. Marjorie and I eagerly watched to see what was going to be in each.

First, there were lemons. Then, there was a bottle of cream and a box of candy. Next, there was a cake that looked as if it had come from an EX-PEN-SIVE tea-room place (it was so rich with soggy chocolate.) After that, there was just a bit of very fine muslin stamped with a collar pattern. She went to her bureau, took out a very EX-PEN-SIVE silk work-bag and, sitting down in the rocker, began to embroider.

I was about to turn my attention to Mr. Wolsen and his wife, and see what the Poet was up to, when Marjorie gave my hand a sudden squeeze. "See! Oh, see!" she exclaimed excitedly. "Look!"

There at the window where the curly white dog had yapped

were two pigeons perched on the sill fluttering to come in—MORE of The Rich Lady's pets!

She opened the window and they flew to her shoulders. It was a pretty sight. Their breasts were iridescently gay, purple shaded to violet. Their wings were soft gray.

"HOW lovely!" I murmured.

"Aren't they!" Marjorie echoed.

We watched them for a very long time. Miss Sweet fed them out of her hand and then let them fly off out of the window again. It must have been about twelve o'clock, for we had sat there a very long time while Miss Genevieve Sweet rocked idly back and forth in the little chair doing fancy-work. It seemed to me rather uninteresting but Marjorie wanted to watch. She said maybe The Rich Lady would try on some of the new gowns that had come from the dressmaker's. She wanted me to see them. Then suddenly the alarm clock in the study went buz-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-Z! Mrs. Wolsen came upstairs to call George down to lunch. His typewriter was going click-click-click-click-click-click-click-DING, ding! Click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-DING! He had taken the alarm for his typewriter bell, as usual!

Mrs. Wolsen knocked at Miss Sweet's door and she called, "Come in." Her voice sounded very pleasant. Then, of course, Mrs. Wolsen explained that it was lunch-time.

The lunch was uneventful. There was a great deal of talk that was rather dull. Mr. Wolsen was thinking of his novel and he was rather absent-minded, passing the salt-cellar in place of the butter dish and putting plum jam into his tea. He seemed relieved to get back to the study. I strongly suspect that Cousin Binkie's friend bored him a bit.

In the afternoon, it was click-click-click-click-click-click-click-D-I-N-G! Click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-ding-ding-DING! Mr. Wolsen was working away at the NOVEL. He

worked as fast as possible since the piano in the next room was quiet and the dog was taking a nap. Miss Sweet continued to do fancy-work quietly, and Mrs. Wolsen took Jackie and went out. (She went to the Intelligence Office to see if she could engage a good general housemaid, as we found out later. She could afford one now that there was the weekly BOARD from The Rich Lady.)

About half-past four she returned. Mr. Wolsen was still working in the study, revising his copy. The work went on by starts, a great deal of scratching out, a great deal of writing in the margin. Mr. Wolsen would surely have to do the chapter over—and could he ever finish it in time to enter the Contest! He sighed. It was that beastly dog barking in the morning, surely. Yes, THAT had given him a bad start. It was only after Miss Sweet had come back at ten-thirty that he could write a word! Blame that dog—and yet George liked dogs, Marjorie said.

At four-fifteen Mrs. Wolsen had put on a fresh shirtwaist and had tripped up to Miss Sweet's room. Miss Sweet had asked her up to have a cup of tea. Peggy Williams, Miss Sweet's niece, was there. She often came to spend the week-end with her aunt, for she was at boarding-school not far away. Curly was there wagging his tail and barking for lumps of sugar; the pigeons, Darby and Joan, were feeding from an ex-pen-sive dish that had been placed on the floor; and soon Peggy Williams, Mrs. Wolsen, and Miss Genevieve Sweet were nibbling the rich chocolate cake and sipping tea. What the Poet was doing, I do not know. The conversation was chiefly about styles—Mrs. Wolsen had some clothes she wished to remodel, you know. There was the old white silk party-dress that was very much out of date.

Miss Sweet suggested how she should do it. She illustrated her suggestions by showing one of the new gowns that hung in her closet. (Marjorie nudged me—I knew she was glad that such an opportunity should occur. She had admired Miss Sweet's gowns

so much.) This one was an orange-colored silk with a net overskirt. It was truly most chic!

In the midst of this rather common-place feminine talk-talk, there was a knock at the door that set Curly to barking, and when

Miss Genevieve Sweet often asked Mrs. Wolsen to afternoon tea

Miss Sweet called, "Come in," the Poet appeared, hesitating upon the threshold. "I just wanted to ask Mrs. Wolsen what had become of the cat," he stated. "I couldn't find her and I thought she must be in here. I've missed the cat so much today! Has she run away?"

Mrs. Wolsen smiled. "No," she returned, "my cat's in the pantry—she's staying till the MOUSE is caught. It hasn't been caught yet, Mr. Piper. I'm sorry!" (Whether she was sorry that the Poet couldn't have the cat or sorry the mouse had not been caught, you might think as you pleased.) Peter Piper may or may

not have dropped in to hear about what-had-become-of-the-cat. It is strongly to be suspected that he knew the cat was in the pantry. His gaze rested hungrily upon the cake that was so heavy with chocolate—and then The Rich Lady, of course, invited him in to have a cup of tea! He ate three pieces of cake—yes, he DID. (Peggy Williams even couldn't out-do *that!*)

When the party broke up because Mrs. Wolsen had to run down to see to things in the kitchen, the Poet called to her softly in the hall, "Mrs. Wolsen, I won't need any dinner tonight. I'm going to write a poem upstairs. I'll be *sure* to be down to breakfast!"

And all this while Mr. Wolsen's typewriter was going click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-ding! Click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-DING! It was going to be a great novel—something that *would* win a prize, if only it could be done in time—if only the piano or the dog didn't begin! Click-click-click-click-click-click-DING! Click-click-click-click-click-click-DING! Click-click-click-click-click-click-click-ding-ding! Click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click-click——

BUT nobody knows how much longer this would have gone on if Marie Claire had not opened the study door abruptly.

"George!" she exclaimed in an excited voice, "the Intelligence Office has sent the housemaid. I've been interviewing her. She can make bread and she seems to dote on children. She's a colored woman, middle-aged. She wants——" Mrs. Wolsen hesitated. "She wants eighteen dollars a month—indeed, George, *that* is very reasonable." (George was frowning.)

"Well, take her," he replied shortly. He thought if, oh, IF THE NOVEL ONLY WON THE PRIZE how fine it would be to be rich! Indeed it was too much for Marie to have the entire care of the house, with the boarders and Jackie besides! "I hope she'll be all right," he said.

We stopped playing after this.

CHAPTER XI

I CAME running back to Marjorie and the big white doll-house as soon as Marjorie's Mother had done up her manuscript and had started to the post-office to mail it. Out in the garden, Mark was making a bird-house. On the porch, Dotty was playing with her gray kitten. I stopped by the way to see the bird-house and play with the kitten.

Marjorie was reproachful. "You've been gone a whole week," she stated. "I thought you never would come back! You've missed ever so much!"

"Why, I didn't know I was gone so long! What happened?"

"Well," Marjorie began, "you missed hearing about George's new book. It's called *The Pantry Mouse*. The first chapter describes the MOUSE that was in the Wolsens' pantry. That is where George found the idea he worked out in his book. Marie says it is a wonderful book—but Mr. Wolsen says one never can tell about prize competitions."

"A great deal depends upon the judges," I agreed. "Tell me about his book—what kind of a hero has he?"

Marjorie smiled. "You couldn't guess! It's the Poet! George put him in and wrote all about the cat in the attic and everything! The heroine is Miss Genevieve Sweet—of course the story is all *fiction*. Nobody writes things exactly as they happen. You have to make up things—I always do when I'm making a school composition—don't you?"

"Very often," I replied. "But does the Poet know?"

"No. The Poet doesn't know at all. George thought best to say nothing till after the prize was awarded."

"Oh!"

"George says that the boarders have helped him ever so much. He takes notes at the table on what they talk about, and he has described four of Miss Genevieve Sweet's new dresses—Marie helped him, of course."

"How is he getting on?"

"He thinks he's doing well. He's almost half-way through. The hero wouldn't behave in one place, so George had to change things to suit *him*. Then, too, things didn't happen as George had intended—"suddenly Marjorie interrupted herself. "Do you know," she exclaimed, "the Wolsens' have a housemaid now? They had a celebration right after she came. She helps Mrs. Wolsen, of course, and she takes care of Jackie, and Tylô, and the cat, and Curly, and the two pigeons. Miss Sweet pays extra for *that*."

"Don't Curly and Tylô ever scrap?"

"Yes, once or twice they did," Marjorie observed. "Now they don't, because Viola always feeds them at different times——"

"*Viola?*"

"Oh, didn't I tell you! The housemaid is a colored woman. They call her Viola. She said her name was Viola Pearl Charmion Johnson," Marjorie giggled. "She wears glasses—she's down in the kitchen now——"

I looked. There she was in the Wolsens' kitchen. She wore a purple and white dress that had green circles in its wide stripes. She wore also a picturesque bandanna and a big white apron. She didn't seem to be doing very much, I thought. And the kitchen—Oh, it didn't look like Mrs. Wolsen's kitchen—not at *all!* THAT may be the way some people keep kitchens, but Mrs. Wolsen's was always *tidy*. Why, there were—COCKROACHES! Mrs. Wolsen had told her to sprinkle insect powder around, but she wouldn't

do it! You couldn't make her do a thing that she didn't want to do, Marjorie said. But they kept her because she seemed the best they could find. You know what maids are!

"Mr. Wolsen has put her into the book, too," Marjorie went on. "One day, just after she came, Mrs. Wolsen *made* George go down to the dining-room to write while they house-cleaned the study. He says he can't find any of his papers since that time. Marie says they didn't disturb a thing, but what do you think Viola said! She called the torn pieces of paper on the floor literature—she said she didn't see how there came to be so *much* literature on the floor. She meant rubbish, but Mr. Wolsen thought it such a good joke that he wrote it up and sent it to LIFE and——" Marjorie paused abruptly. "Oh, I forgot to tell you that Miss Sweet set the Poet's verses about the rose to music—you missed that, only she hasn't played the music yet. And George had two checks in the mail one day. Just think of it. One was from a newspaper—fifty cents for a poem that he dashed off in no time. The other was from THE LADIES' FRIEND for an article, *My Vacation*. The article on the vacation experience brought twelve dollars. It was about the celebration over THE VERY BIG CHECK, the picnic beside the river. George wrote it as if he had been touring in a motor. He said nothing about Marie's lost handkerchief and the carfare, but he told about the artist——"

"Oh," I interrupted, "did they ever return that money to the artist?"

"*Why*, didn't I tell you about that?"

"No," I replied in injured tones. (The very idea of Marjorie's having forgotten to tell me about THAT!) "What was it?" I inquired.

"Why, don't you remember how Marie came up the hill whistling, and how George ran right off to hunt for the dog? They forgot to take the artist's address and they couldn't

return the money! They looked in the directory but he wasn't in it!"

"How funny!"

"No. It wasn't funny. It was sad. George said John Noggins would think they were impos-tors and awfully dishonest. He's always hoping to meet the artist again and the Poet is on the outlook for him too. He's apt to wander in the fields where he *might* come upon an artist some time——"

Just here there was a sudden fearful crash down in the kitchen. It interrupted our further conversation.

There stood Viola Pearl Charmion Johnson brushing up the ruins of Mrs. George Abihad's best tea-pot that had painted pansies on it. "Misery, misery!" she moaned. She had just time to cover the dust-pan with a gingham apron when Mrs. Wolsen opened the kitchen door.

"What was it?" she inquired.

"I reckon it ain't nothin'," returned Viola Pearl in an off-hand way. "I done dropped the tea-pot."

"Which tea-pot?"

"That-a-one with the pansy flowers on, ma'am." (I was glad she was honest about it.)

Then Mrs. Wolsen saw the end of the dust-pan under the apron and she found her tea-pot. It's always that way when you have servants! You have to expect it—the BEST is always broken first, *of course!*

She gathered the bits carefully together. Mr. Wolsen had bought that tea-pot with the very first check he had ever received. It was for a sonnet called *Twilight* that began,

> "I watched the fading glimmer of red sun
> That dipped beyond low mountains far away—
> Past twilight stretches where the long lake lay

Quiet in light that the glad day had spun—
A web of rose and opal that was done
With misty threads drifting to silver gray
Across the heavens——,"

and so on. They had had a celebration over the check and Marie could quote the whole poem. (She had heard it so many times re-read by George.) And now to think that the tea-pot was broken! She carried the pieces up to the study where Mr. Wolsen was pounding away at the typewriter as hard as he could go.

"George," she lamented, "see here!"

Mr. Wolsen glanced at the fragments. He didn't seem to mind especially. "We'll get another," he declared. He didn't seem to care a bit! But Mrs. Wolsen did the pieces up in tissue paper and tied them with a pink ribbon and put them away to keep.

While she was doing this, George kept tapping out his thoughts on the typewriter, clickety-click-click-click-clickety-clickety-clickding! Oh, he simply *pounded*. Everything was going so perfectly splendidly! Then, all of a sudden, a key stuck—and there was SOMETHING THE MATTER WITH THE TYPEWRITER! George poked here and oiled there. Perhaps he poked *too* much, for the typewriter absolutely refused to go at all! George was almost frantic.

"I must finish this," he wailed. "And now I will have to take time to have the typewriter repaired!" He rang up the nearest typewriter office and explained matters over the telephone. They said they would send a man up at once. George waited, and he waited, and he waited, and he waited. Then he rang them up again and said the man had not come. *They* replied that he probably would come soon. That seemed comforting—but though George waited the whole afternoon, the man didn't come, and finally a new person answered the typewriter-place telephone and *he* said that the

repair man couldn't possibly come up that day, he'd gone out of town.

When George heard *that*, he took that heavy typewriter up in his arms and went out of the house without any hat on; and he took the typewriter to ANOTHER place. Something had got into the works and it was soon fixed. George was so happy that he didn't mind paying out seventy-five cents. By the time that he reached

They met around the piano and Miss Sweet sang the Poet's song

home they had all had dinner and his was being kept hot in the oven. The Poet carried the typewriter upstairs, and George was so happy that he said they would have to have a celebration over the typewriter's being all right again. He couldn't work in the evening anyway, so they asked Miss Sweet to play and they asked the Poet to recite. Marie would sing, and George said *he* would put Tylô through his tricks. They met upstairs, after George had eaten a

hearty dinner and finished off with some sort of sweet pudding that was Viola's latest.

Yes, it was rather a nice celebration—something unusual, Mrs. Wolsen thought. She felt proud to have such distinguished persons meeting beneath her roof. The Poet read them his *Ode to Whittington's Cat* and they let Viola Pearl come in to hear it. Then Mr. Wolsen and the Poet insisted that she should sing them a Negro melody. She did it. She sang:

"Swing low sweet cha-ri-ot
Comin' fo' to carry me ho-o-o-o-m——"

Miss Sweet, Mrs. Wolsen, the Poet, and George *all* said she did it wonderfully well. They let her stay to hear Miss Sweet play the Poet's song about his rose-tree. The Rich Lady had set the words to music.

Mrs. Wolsen and Peggy Williams stood on one side of the piano. Mr. Wolsen and Peter Piper were on the other. There was a dreamy, meditative expression upon Mr. Wolsen's face, but the Poet's smile widened and radiated as Miss Sweet's musical interpretation progressed. He was really so happy that you couldn't have expected him to shed tears—yet the words of the song were rather sad. Curly and the cat seemed to enjoy the music, but Tylô barked and had to be taken downstairs.

They encored the song, so Miss Sweet played them another of Mr. Piper's poems she had set to music. It was called *Fame*. Just as she struck the opening bars, Marjorie's lunch bell rang downstairs, and as for me, why, I couldn't stop to hear the rest. I had to run right home as fast as ever I could go!

"I'll come back, maybe," I called as I started down the walk homeward.

CHAPTER XII

NO. I couldn't come back to the white doll-house that day they had the celebration and sang the Poet's verses that Miss Sweet had set to music. It was a long, long time before I could get back to Marjorie's. Ever so many things came up to be done, and even though I longed to know how George was progressing with his book as well as how his typewriter went the next day, I could not take time to find out. Marjorie was so busy with school and practicing that we didn't meet at all. At last, however, I had a free Saturday. Marjorie was at home and there was nothing but plenty of time to play. So, of course, we went to the white doll-house to see what had happened at the Wolsens'.

George was just revising his book. It was almost ready to go to the Prize Competition. He looked worried, and he had been working, Mrs. Wolsen said, en-tire-ly too hard. But the day after tomorrow all manuscripts HAD to be in the judges' hands! Of course, under such conditions, one would have to work hard, Marjorie explained.

It was before breakfast in the Land of Make-Believe when we came to the white doll-house. George had risen at five o'clock in order to complete his work. He was tap-tapping at the typewriter as hard as he could go.

Upstairs in the attic, the Poet was still comfortably snoring. There was no sound about the house till six, when Viola Pearl Charmion Johnson opened the back-door—she went home nights, you know. There wouldn't have been place in the white doll-house for her. Besides that's what they do in the south—Marjorie says so!

Viola Pearl swept the kitchen—or half swept it, whichever way you wish to express the idea. If you're an optimist you'll say she swept it, but if you're a pessimist you'll say she *half* swept. Then she made the coffee and some corn-cakes. Miss Sweet always had Toasted Corn-Flakes. She insisted on keeping the box on the table right near her plate. It didn't belong to anybody else, but once when she was late and the Poet came down early, he was very hungry and he didn't know that *that* Toasted Corn-Flakes belonged to Miss Sweet and *nobody else*. He ate nearly all of it, and when Miss Sweet came there wasn't enough left for her breakfast! Of course, nobody had wanted to tell Mr. Piper *what* he was doing, because he was so sensitive he'd never have gotten over it. (Peter Piper kept a box of pills at *his* plate. Nobody ever takes medicine to the table, but he seemed to think it was something to be proud of, and he always made a face after taking one, just because he thought he ought to. They didn't taste at all bad because Viola Pearl Charmion Johnson tasted one one day. She felt rather inclined to take a second, but if she had done such a thing, probably *she* would have been fearfully sick.)

At seven-fifteen the table had been properly laid with the Toasted Corn-Flakes and the fruit, the corn-cakes, the coffee, and Mr. Piper's pills. Then Viola went out into the hall and RANG the bell.

Scarcely a minute later, the Poet opened the attic door and came trotting downstairs humming the music of Pippa's Song,

"The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven——"

and then his humming ended abruptly as The Rich Lady's door opened and she said "Good-morning."

Mr. Wolsen was waiting impatiently, for he had reached the breakfast table first of all and was decidedly hungry after having worked two long hours before coffee. Peggy Williams came in yawning. She had to wake up because she had to go back to school. Her aunt was going with her to the station. The boarding-school was in the next town and she had to be there for exercises at nine. (If she wasn't, Marjorie said, they wouldn't let her come to visit her aunt again! Think of it!)

Mrs. Wolsen was delayed with Jackie upstairs, so they didn't wait for her. The Poet took his pill and made up an—oh, an *orful* face. (You must never say awful in that way. The DICTIONARY says so and Marjorie says so too. It was a very bad face. That is putting it mildly.)

The Rich Lady took *her* box of Toasted Corn-Flakes and breakfast began.

The Poet's rose-tree had blossomed out, strange to say. Its one bud had grown and grown—though it had taken a good deal of time—and Mr. Piper had brought the full-blown rose down to give to Mrs. Wolsen. He was smelling of it when Mrs. Wolsen came into the room and drew out her chair.

"Why," she said, "it suggests Oliver Wendell Holmes' works: there's *The Poet at the Breakfast Table* sitting next to the *Young Lady* and I do believe that *The Dictator* is discoursing upon something he is going to put in a book!" she laughed.

"Mr. Wolsen was just telling us that he had finished all but the last paragraph of his book," the Poet said.

"HAS he!" exclaimed Mrs. Wolsen. "Isn't that good! We'll have to celebrate it!"

"Yes! Yes!" they cried in chorus. "We must celebrate it!"

"Yes," agreed Mr. Wolsen. "After I send it off, we'll celebrate!"

Peggy Williams wanted to celebrate with a candy-pull. Miss Sweet favored an afternoon tea. The Poet wanted a picnic. So

they decided to have all three. And Mrs. Wolsen said the picnic would be somewhere near the river in the spot where they had celebrated after they had received THE VERY BIG CHECK. (The Wolsens dated events before and after the arrival of THE VERY BIG CHECK, you know.)

Then Miss Sweet said it was time she and Peggy should go to the train, and Mr. Piper said, if they didn't mind, he'd walk up that

The Poet had brought his rose down to give to Mrs. Wolsen

way with them. That left only Viola Pearl, Mrs. Wolsen, and George. Much as they enjoyed the boarders, it was rather good to be quite alone, Mr. Wolsen thought.

He told Mrs. Wolsen so. She said yes, it *was* rather good to be alone for a while. She would bring the sewing-basket and sit in the study while the book was being finished. Viola was going to take Jackie out after she cleared up the dishes.

Click-click-clickety-click-click-click-click-ding! Click-click-click-ety-click-click-click-click-ding! Click-click-clickety-click-click-click-ding!

Suddenly George stopped.

"It's DONE!" said he. "It's D-O-N-E!" Then he pushed back his chair and danced a jig—it was lucky that Miss Sweet was not at home for what *would* she have thought! Mrs. Wolsen started the graphophone, and she danced too! They thought they were quite by themselves in the house, but suddenly who should appear but Viola Pearl Charmion Johnson! She had come in just as the postman was bringing the mail and had brought the letters upstairs. She looked very dignified as if she had heard absolutely nothing and she said:

"The postman says he reckons there's twenty-eight cents due on this," she indicated a long editorial envelope.

George fished in his pocket. He counted out the money. He didn't have exactly twenty-eight cents so he said he'd give the postman the rest in the afternoon. Then he sorted the mail—a card for Mrs. Wolsen, three return manuscripts for himself, another card for Mrs. Wolsen, two letters from magazines for himself, a note for Mrs. Wolsen, a note for himself. It was a small tinted envelope that did not look in the least literary.

So they sat down to look over the mail. George found that the twenty-eight cents was for a manuscript accepted a year ago. The magazine had agreed to pay five dollars for an article two thousand words long, but they were to pay on publication. AND they had failed! They were returning all accepted manuscripts. And George's manuscript was now quite out of date.

He had begun to have checks in his mail quite frequently. Today there was one of fifteen dollars, and he was so accustomed to them that he put it aside to show Marie when she had finished looking at her cards.

He decided to send off the returned manuscripts as soon as the book was wrapped up and ready to go off by express. Then he took up the small tinted envelope that did not look at all literary and broke its seal. This is what he read:

Mr. Abihad Wolsen,
1 Marjorie Place, Pretend.

Dear Mr. Wolsen:

The ladies of The Scribble Club would like to have a literary evening to celebrate the close of their club year. They would be very charmed if you would read to them from your works.

The club treasury is not very full. We can only give you our attention and our deep gratitude.

Can you give us the evening of the thirteenth, this month? The hour is eight-thirty.

Very gratefully,

Winnie Wilkens
Secretary.

This time, George didn't mind interrupting Marie when she was reading her mail. He thrust the letter before her.

"Did you ever!" he exclaimed. "The idea! I won't do it!"

Mrs. Wolsen put down her letter and took up his. She read it with a pleased smile.

"You're becoming famous!" she declared. "You'll HAVE to go. Cousin Binkie belongs to the club—she mayn't be literary, but she does belong and you'll offend her if you don't accept!"

"I'll have another engagement," George insisted. "I won't go! I won't. I'll begin another novel right away—I haven't time! WHAT would I read them anyway!"

"Read them the sonnet called *Twilight*," Marie suggested.

George shook his head. Yet he did go to the chest where he kept his scrap-books, and he let Marie look them over while he tied up the express-parcel that contained THE BOOK.

CHAPTER XIII

TIME flies fast in the Land of Make-Believe, and many things happen in a few minutes, as perhaps you know. A week may pass in an ordinary every-day second. An hour may be a year. When one makes believe, one is quite used to this, so I was not at all astonished to have Marjorie announce suddenly that Mr. Wolsen had sent his BOOK off to the Prize Contest, and that it had been there so long he had ceased to think about it all the whole time. Of course, he *did* think of it a great deal, but he constantly told himself that he knew he would never have a prize—think of it, TEN THOUSAND DOLLARS! It was quite impossible—yes, utterly impossible! Surely not! AND then he began to spend the ten thousand dollar check and plan how they would celebrate IF the book did win a prize—a second prize maybe!

But all this time he was busy writing pot-boilers. Marjorie said so. (Pot-boilers are little scraps of things that editors use to fill space. It takes very little time to do them and, since editors *have* to fill space, they bring their writers checks.) Mr. Wolsen had been so busy upon his BOOK that he had run short of pot-boiler checks and now he needed the money.

All the time that he was so much occupied with making humorous verse, and household hints, and jokes, and descriptive articles, Mrs. Wolsen was struggling with the remodeling of that old white silk dress. She and Miss Genevieve Sweet had many talks over fashion papers. The Rich Lady also showed Marie her new gowns —she was *always* having them sent in from The Marjorie Dress-

Making Establishment. Such very stylish things, and always hats to match!

Mrs. Wolsen was determined to have the dress ready in time for the meeting of the Scribble Club when George was to read some of his "writings." (He very wickedly referred to the event as "going to meet the Scribble Sisters," and once when Cousin Binkie came over to call, he forgot and said *that;* but she was talking so fast that she didn't hear at all!)

The meeting of the Scribble Club was to be on a Monday night at eight-thirty. George had selected what he was going to read and had read it all aloud to Marie privately. She had told him what to emphasize and drilled him in elocution—his elocution was very poor! He had to practice out loud in the study when he was alone. He always locked the door and he always put Tylô and the cat out of the room because they looked at him so that they made him feel embarrassed. They both seemed to think he was doing something very queer, and by their expressions George could tell that they thought him very odd indeed.

And so time went on, always one day nearer to Monday!

Meanwhile, the household of Marjorie's dolls heard a great deal about Monday night and about Mrs. Wolsen's remodeled dress, and the HAT that The Rich Lady had trimmed for Marie. It was a white hat with a great white plume upon it. Marjorie said it should be worn tilted over the left ear—I *think* it was the left ear—maybe it was the right one but there isn't much difference, as far as I can see.

The white dress was fixed up with a white net overskirt that Miss Sweet ripped right off of her orange-colored silk. She insisted on sacrificing it to the remodeling of Mrs. Wolsen's gown, and really it did give a wonderful style to the old dress. You would have thought that it was new, for the spot where Viola Pearl scorched it in pressing had been entirely covered up. There was a wide gold

girdle to the white dress. Oh, it was very fine indeed! Mrs. Wolsen could hardly wait for Monday night to come!

But if Marie grew more and more delighted over the arrival of Monday, poor George grew more and more miserable. He knew the stories that he was to read almost by heart. He could *almost* say them backward, Marjorie said, but the thought of having to read aloud to a roomful of ladies made him a little nervous.

AND then, Monday evening came!

Mrs. Wolsen had her white dress all ready long before five o'clock tea in The Rich Lady's room. She had her HAT and her gloves, and her fan, and her best evening wrap ALL placed in a neat row upon the bed. Beside them was George's dress-suit, and his overcoat and high silk hat. When George saw the dress-suit, it gave him a panic. He hadn't had one on for so long! He remonstrated. He said his blue suit was plenty good enough for the Scribble Club and a well-known man could wear anything! But Marie persuaded him that he would have to wear it. He said that there weren't any studs—if he only hadn't mentioned *that!* But, fortunately, the shops were still open and the studs were bought.

The studs came in a little paper parcel. Mrs. Wolsen laid them carefully on the bed beside the other party things. Then Viola Pearl RANG the dinner-bell and it was time to go downstairs. Tylô had been with them, and in Mrs. Wolsen's haste to go downstairs she forgot the dog and shut him into the bed-room.

Nobody missed him at the table. He was usually behind George's chair, but poor George could think of nothing except the dreadful reading that he was going to give and the dreadful dress-suit he was going to *have* to squeeze into, and he never missed his dear faithful dog at all.

The Poet and Miss Sweet and Mrs. Wolsen were very lively, and they all talked a great deal. Indeed, dinner was longer than usual. It was nearly eight o'clock by the time they had finished.

Why, who would ever have believed it—AND THEY HAD TO BE READY FOR THE CARRIAGE by eight-fifteen!

Poor George! His throat became dry and it was all he could do to keep himself from running off and hiding down cellar in the dark. But he followed Marie upstairs.

Arrived there, Tylô was discovered. He seemed perfectly good and nobody knew he had been bad at all. Usually when he was shut up in a room, he revenged himself by chewing something up. It was sometimes a hassock, sometimes a pillow, sometimes a pin-cushion—if he found a nice one that was quite hard like a base-ball. Though Marie looked all about, she didn't *see* anything that had been chewed. She patted Tylô and called him a good doggie. He wagged the stump of his crooked tail and looked lovingly at George.

Mrs. Wolsen slipped into the remodeled white dress and put on the gilt girdle. Her hair was becomingly dressed by Miss Sweet and she was all ready, when suddenly George wanted to know where the studs were—AND THEY COULDN'T BE FOUND!

Mrs. Wolsen was sure she had put the package on the bed. She hunted under pillows and counterpane, but they were NOT there! Where were they? A wild hunt ensued. The news spread. Everybody was hunting for a little paper package, one about *so* big, Marjorie said. They hunted all the way upstairs. They hunted in the dining-room. They hunted even in the pantry—though Mrs. Wolsen said she *knew* they would find nothing there. AND THE CLOCK WAS AT THREE MINUTES TO EIGHT!

Of course, the Poet had no studs—and of course nobody else had! Mrs. Wolsen said she would pin him into that dress-suit somehow, but though she tried one pin, the rest would not go. She gave it up. Then they thought of the shops—but shops are closed at eight!

It was ten minutes PAST by this time, Marjorie said. And the carriage was already waiting at the door. (It was a hack, but

it sounded much finer to call it a carriage—almost as if one could speak of "James, the footman.")

Mr. Wolsen put on his blue suit—the one he had wanted to wear. He felt rather queer in it when Marie was so stylish, and he was not sure that it was exactly the thing to wear with a high silk

He was very worried. The blue suit didn't go with the silk hat

hat. And all this time Tylô was frisking about at George's heels and getting into the way of Marie while she hunted.

For the forty-eleventh time, she pulled out the upper bureau drawer, having ransacked the lower one. She looked carefully through it, though the hands of the clock upon the bureau pointed to twenty-five minutes past eight! No, No, NO! the little brown paper parcel that was just about *so* big WAS LOST! Poor George! Poor, poor Marie! They HAD to go and they walked downstairs

sadly. ALL the Scribble Club would be waiting—and then George would walk in like *that!* Marie almost wept.

"Couldn't I keep my overcoat on?" George begged.

But Marie Claire did not answer—"George," she said, as if she hadn't heard it, "I KNOW WHAT BECAME OF THE STUDS! TYLÔ CHEWED THEM!"

CHAPTER XIV

IT was true, Tylô had chewed up the parcel that Mrs. Wolsen had left upon the bed. Probably he considered it a kindness to Mr. Wolsen or, maybe, a revenge for being shut upstairs when his place at dinner was behind George's chair. They had to laugh even though it was rather a tragedy.

The meeting of the Scribble Club which Mr. Wolsen was to address was to be held at the home of Miss Suzanne Gush. It was one of those houses that has a parlor filled with gilt chairs and onyx-topped stands. Plants and flowers were at one end of the room where a clear space and a chair indicated the lecturer's platform—which wasn't there. A screen made a background and there was a sofa for the speaker and a table with a pitcher of ice-water.

Mr. Wolsen felt as if he were going to his own execution, Marjorie said. He carried his address—for fear he should have stage-fright and forget it. The sheets were loose and he had mixed them up so much in his nervousness that he was afraid he would begin at the middle or end. He was horribly conscious of his blue suit. All the Scribble Club was dressed in its very best bib and tucker. Cousin Binkie had on the great necklace that she only wore on state occasions.

Miss Gush, who was president of the club, introduced poor George. He made the best of it while she showered compliments. AND THEN MR. WOLSEN REALIZED THAT EVERYBODY WAS LISTENING TO HIM! It was a dreadful sensation. If you have ever spoken a piece at a school entertainment, maybe you know what it feels like. He tried to make a joke and they all tried

to laugh. It was a joke he had once sold to a magazine, and when he had rehearsed his address at home, he had had to laugh because it was so funny. He plodded on and on. He began to forget that there were a hundred and twelve pairs of eyes looking at him. He forgot all about his old blue suit. He didn't remember that he had notes; all he thought about was the story he was telling, and he added to it here and there what he had never learned by heart in his study. It was all new and so funny that he was quite carried away with his own eloquence. Then, suddenly he came to the end. He stopped. His gaze rested for a moment on Cousin Binkie applauding with all her might. It took in a hundred and twelve pair of ladies' hands all clapping—and he bowed.

He had four encores. Then, amid great applause, he retired beaming to the sofa.

Then there was music—a lady whom everybody called Fräulein Schmidt played the harp. She seemed to be somebody one ought to have heard of—but Mr. Wolsen didn't know about her till then. She was rather short and stout and had rather a high forehead. He just happened to glance in Mrs. Wolsen's direction and caught a twinkle in her eye.

After everything was over, they had some parliamentary proceedings in which THE CHAIR did a great many things that sounded like Mother Goose but were doubtless very learned. (Parliamentary law IS learned, Marjorie says. It always sounds to me like animated furniture when I hear it—but then I know nothing at all about clubs anyhow!)

The first thing George knew, Miss Suzanne Gush was introducing him to a very handsome little lady doll dressed in a light blue silk. She had very blond hair and wore a beautiful ornament in it that was rather artistic. She had beautiful deep brown eyes—so rare with that shade of hair—and she was most attractive. He did not catch her name—he was wondering what he should ever

say to the harpist, Fräulein Schmidt, who stood behind her with Cousin Binkie in her grand chain.

Why, who do you suppose it was! It was MRS. NOGGINS, the artist's wife! Just think of it! Why, how interesting! Mr. Wolsen and she had such a pleasant talk, and he found out that John Noggins had come to town and that they had taken a flat not

"The first thing Mr. Wolsen knew, Miss Suzanne Gush was introducing him"

far from Marjorie Place. How very delightful for Mr. and Mrs. Wolsen! Of course, Mrs. Wolsen had to meet Mrs. Noggins too! And somehow, George never quite knew how, he met Fräulein Schmidt, later, and talked to her. He never knew what he said at all. She seemed to think him rather a Hero. It was somewhat embarrassing. What *could* you say to a lady who told you she adored your story? (I didn't know and Marjorie says she wouldn't know what to say either. If it were only an EDITOR, why you'd

know very quickly what to say—you'd ask him double rates on the next one, but a lady is *different.*)

Then, a whole line of ladies of the Scribble Club came one after the other to shake hands and tell him that they had enjoyed his reading. They said that always. Oh, how tiresome! Mr. Wolsen grew more and more bored. He was sure it was time to go home but Mrs. Wolsen was having such a good time! She was so happy—and she did look so lovely in that white dress! George was *sure* she had never looked so pretty. Where had she found that white dress—he didn't remember ever having seen it before! (Oh, and she'd shown it to him and explained *all* about it, but I suppose he was absent-minded and didn't hear—sometimes you could talk and talk to him, and he looked perfectly intelligent, and he'd say "Yes, yes!" and then it would be like this; he wouldn't know what had been said to him at ALL! Marjorie said so.)

"Yes, I've known persons like that—I've even done it myself, Marjorie," I confessed. "I suppose he was thinking of other things and he did know at the time but he forgot."

"Yes, I suppose so," returned Marjorie. "Do you think anybody noticed that he didn't wear his dress-suit?"

"No," I returned. "Only Cousin Binkie and, maybe, Miss Suzanne Gush. Cousin Binkie could have it explained to her, and Miss Gush thought that *Authors* always were rather eccentric. The rest of the club never thought a thing. I don't believe they ever really THOUGHT, do you, Marjorie?"

"They didn't look so," she assented, smiling.

"But it was a very successful evening, wasn't it?"

"Oh, very!"

"Did you understand what they meant when they said, 'The Chair would like to express the club's gratitude to Mr. Wolsen'?"

Marjorie debated. "They didn't mean a real *chair* at all," she meditated. "Why do they always say that in Parliamentary

Proceedings? Why can't they be outspoken and not avoid names?"

"I don't know," I answered. "I'd like to know myself."

"When you find out, tell me——"

I nodded—"Oh, Marjorie," I thought suddenly, "do you suppose that there'll be an account of George's reading in the newspaper? DO YOU!"

"Oh," she cried, "I never thought of THAT! Why, wouldn't that be almost too good to be true!"

"Send a reporter from THE MONTHLY POST over to Miss Suzanne Gush's house, can't you?"

Marjorie laughed. "Dotty's our Society Reporter," she answered. "Miss Dotty Candee—I'll go see to it right away!" and off went the Editor of THE MONTHLY POST to hunt up her reporter.

CHAPTER XV

OF course I was very anxious to see the next number of THE MONTHLY POST. If Marjorie had not been so busy with editorial work and if Mark had not been so busy with editorial work, too—and if Miss Dotty Candee, the Society Reporter, would only have told me about her interview with Miss Gush, I might have found out. As it was, I had to wait a whole day for the paper. To kill time, I went over to the white doll-house all by myself to see what was happening there.

Mr. Wolsen had a headache. He was lying on the sofa in the study with a wet towel wound around his head. He did look very miserable. He had been overworking, Mrs. Wolsen said. What he needed was REST. He really ought to go off to take a vacation —a trip to Europe and back (if it were not for the German submarines) would have been just the thing, for then George could not have taken his typewriter. It would be such re-lax-a-tion as this that would do Mr. Wolsen good! BUT it was out of the question anyway. They simply couldn't afford it!

It did seem very sad that anyone who worked as hard as Mr. Wolsen shouldn't have a vacation!

While I was there, the Poet came down from the attic to ask how Mr. Wolsen was getting on. The grocer's boy, Bill, had given him an orange and he had brought it with him. It was a touching gift, for Mr. Peter Piper ate little but bread and cheese himself—except, of course, when he was invited to dine or came down to the table with Miss Genevieve Sweet, at Mrs. Wolsen's request.

The Scribble Club had sent in two beautiful plants that had

been used for platform decorations on the previous night. Miss Winnie Wilkens, Secretary, had also written to thank Mr. Wolsen for his reading. The plants were now in the parlor.

Miss Genevieve Sweet had taken Jackie into her room to amuse him by letting him watch the pigeons on her window-sill. (She promised Mrs. Wolsen not to let him have any candy—but she did just about everything else that she could to spoil him. She let him have everything he wanted to play with—even the Dresden sugar-bowl that was empty of sugar-lumps)! She managed to keep him very quiet, for as soon as he was tired of one thing, she promptly offered him something more new and diverting.

Downstairs, Viola Pearl Charmion Johnson was in the kitchen having the sulks. She wouldn't answer when you spoke to her and she said she was going to leave! (That's just the way with them—cooks are so un-grate-ful! You give them a dollar added to their month's wages and fee them extra for taking care of Curly and the cat, and as soon as there is any extra work on account of illness in the family, they say they are going to LEAVE!)

Marie came down to the kitchen for a spoon to give George his medicine, and she found Viola Pearl Charmion Johnson and reasoned with her and made her ashamed to have said such things.

The medicine made George feel a little better. He said he wouldn't stay on the sofa any longer—he would get right up and write a little. Nobody could keep him from doing it! He had thought of something that *must be written* and it had to be done while he was in the mood for it. His head was still bound up with a wet towel, but as he wrote he forgot all about his headache.

Click-click-clickety-click-click-click-click-click-ding! Click-click-ety-click-clickety-click-click-clickety-click-ding, ding! Click-clickety-click-click-clickety-click-click-click-ding! He was so busy that he never even heard the door-bell at all. He didn't even know that Marie had come into the study till she put her hand on his shoulder.

"George," said she, "do you feel well enough to come downstairs? There's a gentleman in the parlor. He asked for Mr. ABIHAD Wolsen! Viola just brought me the card."

Mr. Wolsen tiptoed softly into the hall and peeped over the banisters. All he could see was a hat and a cane in the front-hall on the hat-stand. He looked at the card. It bore the name of

MR. GASTON BRACTON

Who was he?

"Are you sure he isn't a book agent?" George questioned, coming back into the study softly and closing the door.

Marie shook her head. "His voice didn't sound like that of a book agent," she returned.

"I suppose I'll have to see him——"

"Perhaps you'd better——"

George unwound the towel from his poor head and brushed his hair. Then he limped downstairs very like an invalid. He went to the parlor and there was a smallish dark-haired gentleman dressed in a serge suit of an unmistakably English cut. He rose as George entered.

"I'm Mr. Bracton of the firm of Bracton, Brown & Sons," he said.

George gave a gasp—I really think he forgot to shake hands! COULD IT BE—COULD IT?—George held on to a nearby chair (he was still weak from that headache). It must be about THE BOOK! It MUST HAVE TAKEN A PRIZE!

I did not wait to hear explanations. I rushed to the office of THE MONTHLY POST as fast as my feet could go. "Marjorie, Marjorie," I screamed, "stop the presses! Wait! Mr. GEORGE ABIHAD WOLSEN HAS WON THE TEN THOUSAND DOLLAR PRIZE FOR THE BOOK!"

Marjorie dropped her pencil. Together we ran back to the white doll-house all excitement. (I hadn't heard anything but the mere announcement—I missed all the rest by going for Marjorie.) They were talking over plans for its publishing when we arrived. The check of ten thousand dollars was in George's pocket.

George said he knew the very man to do the illustrating—Mr. John Noggins. Did Mr. Bracton know his work? Mr. Bracton said yes, he had seen it in the magazines. How much would John Noggins be likely to ask? George said he didn't know but he'd ask. He would like about one illustration to a chapter, and decorations in the margins, and a special design for the dedication page. (It was dedicated to Marie because of her mouse scare.) And he would like a handsome cover with gilt lettering. Mr. Noggins could do the cover, too.

Mr. Bracton suggested that one must remember the expense, but with a ten thousand dollar check in his pocket, George insisted.

Finally they agreed to do without quite so many pictures, though George in-sist-ed on the gilt lettering. He said that his first BOOK must have *that!* George scarcely knew what he was doing; it seemed like a dream. Think of it: to have won the First Prize; to have a TEN THOUSAND DOLLAR CHECK; to be having a BOOK PUBLISHED WITH GILT LETTERING AND ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN NOGGINS! It was too good to be true! As Mr. Bracton of Bracton, Brown & Sons rose to go, George stood gazing stupidly into space trying to realize it all. He was dazed with good-fortune. He went to the door with the publisher, but he never knew whether he said *Good-morning* or *Good-afternoon.*

Marie came tripping down to find out what the long call meant. When she was told, she declared that she always knew THE BOOK would have the ten thousand dollar check and win the prize. Of course!

They talked about the pictures and the gilt lettering and were

busy planning what color cover they would like for THE BOOK, when Viola Pearl Charmion Johnson knocked at the door and asked in an injured voice what Mrs. Wolsen wanted to have her cook for luncheon. Why, it was almost one o'clock!

The Poet came down that noon, by very special request, to help celebrate the good news. Miss Genevieve Sweet brought a

Mr. Wolsen gazed stupidly into space trying to realize his good-fortune

big bunch of flowers from her room, and Mr. Piper brought a verse to read in honor of Mr. Wolsen and the PRIZE. He had to dash it off in ten minutes while they waited downstairs for him, but he managed to do it, and he signed a beautiful autograph to it too. He wanted to seal it with a green seal but there wasn't time.

They put George's German stein at his place and gave him some ginger-pop in it to drink to the health of the BOOK, and everybody else had their ginger-pop in a tumbler. (You remember the

motto on George's stein? It was appropriate to the occasion: "Lustig ist der Mann der arbeitet." Marjorie said that meant, "Happy is the man who works." I said it ought to have been "Happy is the man who wins a prize of ten thousand dollars," but she said they never put mottoes like that on a stein.)

In the afternoon, Marie went with George to the bank so that he wouldn't hand his ten thousand dollar check in at the cash-window of a butcher shop or give it to the librarian at the charging desk of the Public Library, as he had done when he went, long ago, to cash his first VERY LARGE CHECK in a fit of absent-mindedness. They agreed to celebrate with something better than a picnic, this time. There was plenty of time to decide WHAT—maybe a trip to the South Sea Islands. George had always wanted to go there. Maybe a little trip around the world taking in India and Japan. Maybe—but here they came to THE BANK.

After that, just for fun, they took the red car marked Mount Riverby and went out to see the river and the fields. On their way home, they stopped to call at Mr. and Mrs. John Noggins' flat and return the ten cents they had borrowed.

"Wasn't the artist delighted!" exclaimed Marjorie.

"Wasn't Mrs. Noggins pleased!" I echoed.

"Wasn't it ALL simply splendid!"

"Wasn't it!" We sat there beside the white doll-house gloating over the good-fortune.

"And Miss Sweet—wasn't she pleased to have been made a heroine! To think that her picture will be in the BOOK!"

"And she can pose for it in that orange-colored silk with the hat that tilts over to one side!"

"AND the Poet—why, it'll make HIM famous! Everybody will be wanting his autograph! Maybe he'll have to have a secretary to write it for him—THINK OF IT! He'll be rich, won't he!

All the editors will want his verses. He'll have no trouble in selling *The Ode to Whittington's Cat!*"

How fine! How FINE! Oh, HOW VERY, VERY, VERY, VERY FINE! But right here, in came Mark, associate editor of THE MONTHLY POST.

"Marj," said he, "isn't your copy ready yet? The presses are waiting." And Marjorie fled back to her desk. THAT explains why THE MONTHLY POST was not out exactly on time.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MONTHLY POST came out next day with a full account of everything. It told about the Reading at the Scribble Club and it told about Mr. Wolsen's having won the ten thousand dollar prize. It said that John Noggins, the illustrator, was to make the pictures for the BOOK. It hinted that a certain rich lady was the heroine and that she might perhaps pose for Mr. Noggins. It said quite plainly that Mr. Peter Piper was the hero and that he resided in Mr. Wolsen's attic. That issue of THE MONTHLY POST was in very great demand. It ran out in no time at all!

Mr. Wolsen was starting to go to call on John Noggins the following afternoon. He wanted to talk over the matter of illustration. As he came downstairs, he heard Viola Pearl Charmion Johnson talking very loudly at the door. It was a reporter—ANOTHER! She was declaring that Mr. Wolsen was not at home and that everybody was out. George sneaked out of the back-door with his portfolio. Tylô happened to see him and George decided to let him go to Noggins' house for he wagged so that it was cruel not to let him! They started off and had just reached the corner when up came *two more reporters!*

George walked straight ahead as if he didn't see them, but he knew they were taking off their hats and he knew that one of them had a camera. He felt self-conscious though he tried hard to look very dignified indeed. Tylô didn't like the reporters. He showed it plainly.

It was Binks of THE CABLEGRAM who got him to answer

the first question. "What you do think of prize contests, Mr. Wolsen?" he asked.

George quite forgot. He said he thought that they were simply GREAT. He began to talk about THE BOOK before he knew what he was doing. All of a sudden, he saw Snooks of THE RAMROD write something on his cuff—and then Binks snapped the camera

"George walked right ahead as if he didn't see the reporters"

again! He brushed suddenly past them. "Excuse me, gentlemen," said he, "I am in haste."

"Where are you going?" Snooks of THE RAMROD yelled after him. But Mr. Wolsen did not reply. He walked as fast as he could go in the opposite direction to John Noggins' flat, and then when he thought he had lost them, he turned around and walked back by a side street.

John Noggins was waiting for him. They had a long pleasant

chat about the illustrations for THE BOOK. It was wonderfully delightful.

John Noggins had a studio that took up almost all the room there was. He showed George all his things and the picture he had been making of the lamb that eventful day when Mr. and Mrs. Wolsen had celebrated with the picnic and had lost the handkerchief that contained the carfare home.

They laughed about THAT all over again. The artist wanted to know whether the ten thousand dollar check was done up in Mrs. Wolsen's handkerchief and George replied NO. It was in the BANK.

He hinted at a delightful little trip around the world that he and Marie expected shortly to take. They might go to India and see the elephants and maybe call on Kipling—Mr. Wolsen was vague about everything as yet. Mrs. Wolsen had not yet decided. They could not go till after THE BOOK had been published, of course.

And they chatted on till it grew dark and George thought he must be going. Then John Noggins walked home with George.

"Marjorie! Why, I must run home, too!" I exclaimed. "I didn't realize how time has flown. Be sure to watch *everything* that happens while I'm away for I want to know it ALL."

And Marjorie said she would be sure to watch and tell me everything.

That night, as I was about to take up a newspaper to read, the telephone bell rang. It was Marjorie's voice over the wire.

"SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED!"

"Oh! WHAT?"

"The Poet's had a fortune left him. It came from his Uncle in Australia! He's going to move out of the attic!"

There was not time to absorb this wonderful news before I heard Marjorie's voice continue: "The Rich Lady is going to move out of the best bed-room too——"

"Oh, Marjorie," I protested.

"YES!"

"Right away?"

"Tomorrow!"

"Oh, I can't be there to see her move out then!"

"I'll tell you about it."

"WHY is she going?"

"Because," explained Marjorie's voice, "Cousin Binkie is lonesome and she wants Miss Sweet to come and share her home with *her*."

"I suppose Curly and the pigeons will go too——"

"Oh, yes! Surely!" There was a pause. I waited for Marjorie to continue. Nobody knew WHAT news would come next!

"The Wolsens have decided not to go around the world," she stated. "They are going to take a cruise about the South Sea Islands instead."

"MUCH nicer," I approved. "THAT is where literary people like the Wolsens ought to go——"

Then we said good-night and I hung up the receiver.

But I had always thought the Poet would marry Miss Sweet!

CHAPTER XVII

I MIGHT go on and tell about how Miss Genevieve Sweet went to Cousin Binkie's to live, and how Curly snapped at the expressman when he came for the trunks that contained the wonderful dresses from The Marjorie Dress-Making Establishment. I might tell how the Poet tearfully packed his box and moved out of the attic. Such things, however, are not concerned with THE BOOK except indirectly, and as all good-byes are sad, it is better to hurry over them. Suffice it that Mr. and Mrs. Wolsen moved back into their old quarters again and were very happy to do so. Both Miss Genevieve Sweet and the Poet could come to call. It was not as if they were going away as George expressed it, "for *bad!*" (And you know that both George and Marie were glad to be quite alone by themselves again, even though it meant a temporary loss of the delightful breakfast talks that were so suggestive of Oliver Wendell Holmes.)

Jackie was growing fast, and now that they had been able to buy a carriage for him, they had engaged to keep Viola Pearl as a kind of mammy especially to look after him. He was always getting into mischief, you know.

I heard all these things from Marjorie and from her, too, I learned from time to time other bits of interesting information. The artist had finished Miss Genevieve Sweet's picture in the orange silk gown. (It looked exactly as a *heroine* should.) Next, I heard how Peter Piper had signed thirteen autographs and had sent his photograph with them to thirteen ladies of the Scribble Club. (George was "busy writing" almost every time I asked for him!)

One day Marjorie told me that Mrs. Wolsen had bought the cloth suit she always had wanted. It ex-act-ly matched the gray-green Tipperary hat that had blue forget-me-nots on it—the one George had bought with THE VERY BIG CHECK.

As for George, Marjorie said, he still clung to his old blue suit with the striped trousers and refused to buy himself any new one—though Mrs. Wolsen selected several and had them sent up on approval. He declared they didn't fit and he thought the blue suit plenty good enough for a literary man like himself.

I went in to see Marjorie shortly after she telephoned me that THE BOOK had come from Bracton, Brown & Sons, publishers. Though I was busy writing something very important to little girls, I couldn't resist THAT.

It was in the evening, after tea. We ran through the lighted hall softly past Dotty's room where she was fast asleep, and we told Mark that we'd come back and play a game later on. We did not stop till, hand in hand, we stood before the white doll-house.

A light was in the Poet's attic and Viola Pearl was there sitting by a table crocheting with pink wool. Her kitchen was neat. There was not even the sign of a COCKROACH now, Marjorie said. In the pantry, all was dark—not the squeak even of a MOUSE!

In the hallway, Tylô lay on guard. Now that the Wolsens were well off, there was more than the Venetian vase that *might* be attractive to burglars! None had come yet, but both George and Marie were glad that they had purchased a bull-dog when they could find so good and faithful a one as Tylô! All seemed dark downstairs except for the low light that burned in the hall. It was after tea—about eight-thirty in the Land of Make-Believe.

In the study, George and Marie were cosily sitting beside an open fire in the grate. The lamp was upon a table near-by with George's portfolio and pipe and Mrs. Wolsen's very domestic sewing-basket.

Mrs. Wolsen was looking over George's BOOK for the hundred and forty-eleventh time. It was duodecimo, cloth—blue with gilt lettering. Mr. Noggins' picture of Miss Genevieve Sweet as heroine was an insert upon the front of the cover. You would scarcely have known that it *was* Miss Sweet, for he had idealized her and made her most unusually beautiful. It was so very flattering that all Miss Sweet's relatives bought copies of the book to send to friends.

The frontispiece was of Mr. Piper and Miss Sweet. You would have known Peter Piper—he wasn't changed the way that Miss Sweet was. His hair was exactly as long and exactly as fuzzy. He was shown offering Miss Sweet, the heroine, a pink rose. (Marjorie said the rose was "the color of strawberry ice-cream," but I said NO! Not at all! NOT AT ALL! It was the color the printer printed.)

The dedication page was beautiful. Marie was very much touched by it. She kept looking back at it all the time.

Really, THE BOOK was something to be very proud of indeed! Ever so many people had written to Mr. Abihad Wolsen praising it. They hoped it would be a Best Seller. It was advertised so anyhow.

George was busy reading reviews of the BOOK. Some, he liked. Others he didn't like at all. "The chap who reviewed THE BOOK doesn't know a thing!" he said, or else, "Say, Marie, I'd like to write and thank that fellow on THE RAMROD for what he says. He's a man who has imagination——"

Some said it was the best book of the year! Why, editors all over had begun to write to ask for manuscripts. They began as soon as the PRIZE was announced. Mr. Wolsen had forwarded them all his old rejected manuscripts. The postman never brought any back either! It was simply GREAT to be the winner of a ten thousand dollar prize! Things that would have sold ordinarily for two dollars brought twenty-five! George even had a "rate" now. It was *fifty cents a* word. THINK OF IT! Why, all he had

to write was "See the cat. Can the cat jump? Yes, the c-a-t can jump," and he'd have six dollars! That's easy! You can grow rich like *that!* (The punctuation—periods, commas, and question marks, don't reckon in the sum—but they don't matter. If you are a successful AUTHOR, you have a secretary who puts them in. George had no secretary *yet.* Mrs. Wolsen said she'd help him.)

Mr. Wolsen was reading the press notices of the book

George had had ever and ever so many requests for other books from other publishers but he had promised his next to Bracton, Brown & Sons. (They really had been nice about the blue cover and the gilt lettering, and George felt loyally grateful. They *might* have put THE BOOK into a yellow-green cover and given it magenta lettering. THAT would have been—oh, DREADFUL!)

Yes, THE BOOK was a very great and happy success. Both Mr. and Mrs. Wolsen and the firm of Bracton, Brown & Sons were

delighted! It couldn't help but be a success for it was a gripping story of real life, distinctly vigorous, full of exciting incidents and strong situations.

Why, one day what do you suppose had happened? Mrs. Wolsen had asked Viola Pearl Charmion Johnson to bring a pitcher of cold water into the dining-room and Viola Pearl Charmion Johnson had said, "Yes, Ma'am," and had gone to get it. She turned on the faucet in the kitchen sink to let the water run and while it ran, she picked up a copy of *The Pantry Mouse*—it was the one Mrs. Wolsen had given her—and she became so interested that she read and read and READ! The whole kitchen sink began to overflow, and it was not till the water reached Viola Pearl's feet that she stopped, suddenly realizing that the kitchen was actually flooded! She had reached the end of Chapter Three and had never known a thing since she opened the book—except about the gripping story, of course! Mrs. Wolsen had come in to see *why* Viola Pearl had not brought the water-pitcher and when she saw WHY, she was so touched and pleased that she never said a word! She told Viola Pearl that she'd give her the afternoon off to read the rest.

George had been very pleased over this. He had reason to be!

"I will write a better book than this some day," he declared to Mrs. Wolsen. "Yes, I have been thinking things over and I have a good plot mapped out—something entirely original. I shall have Noggins illustrate it too. His pictures are capital!"

"Capital!" echoed Marie, and little Jackie who was just learning to talk said "cat-cul," which was, no doubt, his view of THE BOOK too. Mrs. Wolsen said so. She declared that Jackie would grow up to be an AUTHOR just like his father.

As we stood before the white doll-house, Marjorie and I, we, too, were as happy as George and Marie. It was wonderful, Marjorie said, to have a doll like Mr. George Abihad Wolsen!

"Are they going to celebrate with that little trip, now that THE BOOK is published?" I asked.

Marjorie nodded. "They've bought an automobile," she said. "They've decided to stay in the white doll-house and run out into the country with it often. George couldn't be away for long when he has so much work claiming him at home, you know. They're going to have a grand party, though, a really fine one and the Poet and Miss Sweet are coming, and Cousin Binkie; and all the ladies of the Scribble Club are ordering new frocks of the Marjorie Dress-Making Establishment! It is to be a very GREAT CELEBRATION!"

"I should miss them if they had gone to the South Sea Islands or around the world," said I.

"I should, too," Marjorie smiled.

THE END

Mr. G. ABHAD Wolsen is now famous. You can often see him driving in the Park

We'll meet you again in the Land of Play
With Marjorie's Little Doll School some
day.